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JEWISH PORTRAITS.

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" The pedlar and hawker fathers, with their packs cast off, were priests and teachers too."

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Jewish Portraits

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BY

LADY MAGNUS

AUTHOR OF "OUTLINES OF JEWISH HISTORY," "ABOUT THE JEWS SINCE BIBLE TIMES," ETC

BOSTON

CUPPLES AND HURD, 23 SCHOOL ST.

The Algonquin Press

1889

947

L.H.
427.886
Mar. 18. 1859

"THESE, TO HIS MEMORY."

FEBRUARY 7: JANUARY 11.

PREFACE.

THE papers which form this volume have already appeared in the pages of *Good Words*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, *The National Review*, and *The Spectator*, and are reprinted with the very kindly given permission of the editors. The Frontispiece is reproduced through the kindness of the proprietors of *Good Words*.

I fancy that there is enough of family likeness, and I hope there is enough of friendly interest, in these Jewish portraits to justify their re-appearance in a little gallery to themselves.

KATIE MAGNUS.

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Jewish Portraits.

JEHUDAH HALEVI.

PHYSICIAN AND POET.

In the far-off days, when religion was not a habit, but an emotion, there lived a little-known poet who solved the pathetic puzzle of how to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. Minor poets of the period in plenty had essayed a like task, leaving a literature the very headings of which are strange to uninstructed ears. "*Piyutim*," "*Selichoth*," what meaning do these words convey to

most of us? And yet they stand for songs of exile, sung by patient generations of men who tell a monotonous tale of mournful times—

> "When ancient griefs
> Are closely veiled
> In recent shrouds,"

as one of the anonymous host expresses it. For the writers were of the race of the traditional Sweet Singer, and their lot was cast in those picturesquely disappointing Middle Ages, too close to the chivalry of the time to appreciate its charm. One pictures these comparatively cultured pariahs, these gaberdined, degenerate descendants of seers and prophets, looking out from their ghettoes on a world which, for all the stir and bustle of barbaric life, was to them as desolate and as bare of promise of safe resting-place as when the waters covered it, and only the tops of the mountains appeared. One sees them

now as victims, and now as spectators but never as actors in that strange show, yet always, we fancy, realizing the barbarism, and with that undoubting faith of theirs in the ultimate dawning of a perfect day, seeming to regard the long reign of brute force, of priestcraft, and of ignorance as phases of misrule, which, like unto manifold others, should pass whilst they would endure.

> "A race that has been tested
> And tried through fire and water,
> Is surely prized by Thee,"

cries out a typical bard, with, perhaps, a too-conscious tone of martyrdom, and a decided tendency to clutch at the halo. The attitude is altogether a trifle arrogant and stolid and defiant to superficial criticism, but one for which a deeper insight will find excuses. The complacency is not quite self-complacency, the pride is impersonal, and so though provoking, is pathetic too. Something

of the old longing which, with a sort of satisfied negation, claimed "honour and glory," "not unto us," but unto "the Name," seems to find expression again in the unrhymed and often unrhythmical compositions of these patient poets of the *Selicha*. Their poetry, perhaps, goes some way towards explaining their patience, for, undoubtedly, there is no doggedness like that of men who at will, and by virtue of their own thoughts, can soar above circumstances and surroundings. "Vulgar minds," says a last-century poet, truly enough, "refuse or crouch beneath their load," and inevitably such will collapse under a pressure which the cultivated will endure, and "bear without repining." The ills to which flesh is heir will generally be best and most bravely borne by those to whom the flesh is not all in all; as witness Heine, whose voice rose at its sweetest, year after

year, from his mattress grave. That there never was a time in all their history when the lusts of the flesh were a whole and satisfying ambition to the Jew, or when the needs of the body bounded his desires, may account in some degree for that marvellous capacity for suffering which the race has evinced.

These rugged *Piyutim*, for over a thousand years, come in from most parts of the continent of Europe as a running commentary on its laws, suggesting a new reading for the old significant connection between a country's lays and its legislation, and supplying an illustration, to Charles Kingsley's dictum, that "the literature of a nation is its autobiography." *Selicha* (from the Hebrew, סלחה) means literally forgiveness, and to forgive and to be forgiven is the burden and the refrain of most of the so-called Penitential Poems (*Selichoth*), whose theme is of sorrows and persecutions

past telling, almost past praying about. *Piyut* (derived from the Greek ποιητής) in early Jewish writings stood for the poet himself, and later on it was applied as a generic name for his compositions. From the second to the eighth century there is decidedly more suggestion of martyrdom than of minstrelsy in these often unsigned and always unsingable sonnets of the synagogue, and especially about the contributions from France, and subsequently from Germany, to the liturgical literature of the Middle Ages, there is a far too prevailing note of the swan's song for cheerful reading. Happier in their circumstances than the rest of their European co-religionists, the Spanish writers sing, for the most part, in clearer and higher strains, and it is they who, towards the close of the tenth century, first add something of the grace and charm of metrical versification to the hitherto crude and rough style of

composition which had sufficed. Even about the prose of these Spanish authors there is many a light and happy touch, and, not unseldom, in the voluminous and somewhat verbose literature, we come across a short story (*midrash*) or a pithy saying, with salt enough of wit or of pathos about it to make its preservation through the ages quite comprehensible.

Hep, Hep, was the dominant note in the European concert, when at the beginning of the twelfth century our poet was born. France, Italy, Germany, Bohemia, and Greece had each been, at different times within the hundred years which had just closed, the scene of terrible persecutions. In Spain alone, under the mild sway of the Omneyade Kaliphs, there had been a tolerably long entr'acte in the "fifteen hundred year tragedy" that the Jewish race was enacting, and there, in old

Castille, whilst Alfonso VI. was king, Jehudah Halevi passed his childhood. Although in 1085 Alfonso was already presiding over an important confederation of Catholic States, yet at the beginning of the twelfth century the Arab supremacy in Spain was still comparatively unshaken, and its influence, social and political, over its Jewish subjects was still paramount. Perhaps the one direction in which that impressionable race was least perceptibly affected by its Arab experiences was in its literature. And remembering how distinctly in the elder days of art the influence of Greek thought is traceable in Jewish philosophy, it is very strange to note with these authors of the Middle Ages, who write as readily in Arabic as in Hebrew, that, though the hand is the hand of Esau, the voice remains unmistakeably the voice of Jacob. Munk dwells on this remarkable distinction in

the poetry of the period, and, with some natural preference perhaps, strives to account for it in the wide divergence of the Hebrew and Arabic sources of inspiration. The poetry of the Jews he roundly declares to be universal, and that of the Arabs egotistic in its tendency; the sons of the desert finding subjects for their Muse in traditions of national glory and in dreams of material delight, whilst the descendants of prophets turn to the records of their own ancestry, and find their themes in remorseful memories, and in unselfish and unsensual hopes. With the Jewish poet, past and future are alike uncoloured by personal desire, and even the sins and sufferings of his race he enshrines in song. If it be good, as a modern writer has declared it to be, that a nation should commemorate its defeats, certainly no race has ever been richer in such subjects, or has shown itself more

willing, in ritual and rhyme, to take advantage of them.

Whilst the leaders of society, the licentious crusader and the celibate monk, were stumbling so sorely in the shadow of the Cross, and whilst the rank and file throughout Europe were steeped in deepest gloom of densest ignorance and superstition, the lamp of learning, handed down from generation to generation of despised Jews, was still being carefully trimmed, and was burning at its brightest among the little knot of philosophers and poets in Spain. Alcharisi, the commentator and critic of the circle, gives, for his age, a curiously high standard of the qualifications essential to the sometimes lightly bestowed title of authorship. "A poet," he says, "(1) must be perfect in metre; (2) his language of classic purity; (3) the subject of his poem worthy of the poet's best skill, and calculated to instruct and to elevate mankind; (4) his style

must be full of 'lucidity' and free from every obscure or foreign expression; (5) he must never sacrifice sense to sound; (6) he must add infinite care and patience to his gift of genius, never submitting crude work to the world; and (7) lastly, he must neither parade all he knows nor offer the winnowings of his harvest."

These seem sufficiently severe conditions even to nineteenth-century judgment, but Jehudah Halevi, say his admirers and even his contemporaries, fulfilled them all.

That a man should be judged by his peers gives a promise of sound and honest testimony, and if such judgment be accepted as final then does Halevi hold high rank indeed among men and poets. One of the first things that strike an intruder into this old-world literary circle is the curious absence of those small rivalries and jealousies which we of other times and manners look instinctively to

find. Such records as remain to us make certainly less amusing reading than some later biographies and autobiographies afford, but, on the other hand, it has an unique interest of its own, to come upon authentic traces of such susceptible beings as authors, all living in the same set and with a limited range both of subjects and of readers, who yet live together in harmony, and interchange sonnets and epigrams curiously free from every suggestion of envy, hatred, or uncharitableness. There is, in truth, a wonderful freshness of sentiment about these gentle old scholars. They say pretty things to and of each other in almost school-girl fashion. "I pitch my tent in thy heart," exclaims one as he sets out on a journey. More poetically Halevi expresses a similar sentiment to a friend of his (Ibn Giat):

"If to the clouds thy boldness wings its flight,
Within our hearts, thou ne'er art out of sight."

Writes another (Moses Aben Ezra), and he was a philosopher and grammarian to boot, one not to be lightly suspected of sentimentality, "Our hearts were as one: now parted from thee, my heart is divided into two." Halevi was the absent friend in this instance, and he begins his response as warmly :—

> "How can I rest when we are absent one from another?
> Were it not for the glad hope of thy return
> The day which tore thee from me
> Would tear me from all the world."

Or the note changes: some disappointment or disillusion is hinted at, and under its influence our tender-hearted poet complains to this same sympathetic correspondent, "I was asked, Hast thou sown the seed of friendship? My answer was, Alas, I did, but the seed did not thrive."

It is altogether the strangest, soberest little picture of sweetness and light, showing beneath the gaudy, tawdry phantas-

magoria of the age. Rub away the paint and varnish from the hurrying host of crusaders, from the confused crowd of dreary, deluded rabble, and there they stand like a "restored" group, these tuneful, unworldly sages, "toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing," with Jehudah Halevi, poet and physician, as central figure. For, loyal to the impulse which in times long past had turned Akiba into a herdsman and had induced Hillel in his youth and poverty to "hire himself out wherever he could find a job,"[1] which, in the time to come, was to make of Maimonides a diamond cutter, and of Spinoza an optician, Halevi compounded simples as conscientiously as he composed sonnets, and was more of doctor than of poet by profession. He was true to those traditions and instincts of his race, which, through all the ages, had recognized the dignity of labour and had inclined to use

[1] Talmud, Yoma 356.

literature as a staff rather than as a crutch. His prescriptions were probably such as the Pharmacopœia of to-day might hardly approve, and the spirit in which he prescribed, one must own, is perhaps also a little out of date. Here is a grace just before physic which brings to one's mind the advice given by a famous divine of the muscular Christianity school to his young friend at Oxford, "Work hard—as for your degree, leave it to God."

> "God grant that I may rise again,
> Nor perish by Thine anger slain.
> This draught that I myself combine,
> What is it? Only Thou dost know
> If well or ill, if swift or slow,
> Its parts shall work upon my pain.
> Ay of these things, alone is Thine
> The knowledge. All my faith I place,
> Not in my craft, but in Thy grace."[1] (1)

Halevi's character, however, was far enough removed from that which an old author has defined as "pious and paine-

[1] The extracts marked thus (1) have been done into verse from the German of Geiger, by Miss Amy Levy.

full." He "entered the courts with gladness:" his religion being of a healthy, happy, natural sort, free from all affectations, and with no taint either of worldliness or of other worldliness to be discerned in it. Perhaps our poet was not entirely without that comfortable consciousness of his own powers and capabilities which, in weaker natures, turns its seamy side to us as conceit, nor altogether free from that impatience of "fools" which seems to be another of the temptations of the gifted. This rather ill-tempered little extract which we are honest enough to append appears to indicate as much :—

> "Lo! my light has pierced to the dark abyss,
> I have brought forth gems from the gloomy mine;
> Now the fools would see them! I ask you this:
> Shall I fling my pearls down before the swine?
> From the gathered cloud shall the raindrops flow
> To the barren land where no fruit can grow?" (1)

The little grumble is characteristic, but in actual fact no land was "barren" to

his hopeful sunny temperament. In the "morning he sowed his seed, and in the evening he withheld not his hand," and from his "gathered clouds," the raindrops fell rainbow-tinted. The love songs, which a trustworthy tradition tells us were written to his wife, are quite as beautiful in their very different way as an impassioned elegy he wrote when death claimed his friend, Aben Ezra, or as the famous ode he composed on Jerusalem. Halevi wrote prose too, and a bulky volume in Arabic is in existence, which sets forth the history of a certain Bulan, king of the Khozars, who reigned, the antiquarians agree, about the beginning of the eighth century, over a territory situate on the shores of the Caspian Sea. This Bulan would seem to have been of a hesitating, if not of a sceptical, turn of mind in religious matters. Honestly anxious to be correct in his opinions, his anxiety becomes intensified by means of

a vision, and he finally summons representative followers of Moses, of Jesus, and of Mahomet to discuss in his presence the tenets of their masters. These chosen doctors of divinity argue at great length, and the Jewish Rabbi is said to have best succeeded in satisfying the anxious scruples of the king. The same authorities tell us that Bulan became an earnest convert to Judaism, and commenced in his own person a Jewish dynasty which endured for more than two centuries. Over these more or less historic facts Halevi casts the glamour of his genius, and makes, at any rate, a very readable story out of them, which incidentally throws some valuable side lights on his own way of regarding things. Unluckily, side lights are all we possess, in place of the electric illuminating fashion of the day. Those copious details, which our grandchildren seem likely to inherit concerning all and sundry of

this generation, are wholly wanting to us, the earlier heirs of time. Of Halevi, as of greater poets, who have lived even nearer to our own age, history speaks neither loudly nor in chorus. Yet, for our consolation, there is the reflection that the various and varying records of "Thomas's ideal John: never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either," may, in truth, help us but little to a right comprehension of the "real John, known only to His Maker." Once get at a man's ideals, it has been well said, and the rest is easy. And thus though our facts are but few and fragmentary concerning the man of whom one admirer quaintly says that, "created in the image of God" could in his case stand for literal description, yet may we, by means of his ideals, arrive perhaps at a juster conception of Halevi's charming personality than did we possess the very pen with which he wrote and the desk

at which he sat and the minutest and most authentic particulars as to his wont of using both.

His ideal of religion was expressed in every practical detail of daily life.

> "When I remove from Thee, O God,
> I die whilst I live; but when
> I cleave to Thee, I live in death."[1]

These three lines indicate the sentiment of Judaism, and might almost serve as sufficient sample of Halevi's simple creed, for, truth to tell, the religion of the Jews does not concern itself greatly with the ideal, being of a practical rather than of an emotional sort, rigid as to practice, but tolerant over theories, and inquiring less as to a man's belief than as to his conduct. Work—steady, cheerful, untiring work—was perhaps Halevi's favourite form of praise. Still, being a poet he sings, and, like the birds, in divers strains, with happy, unconscious

[1] From Atonement Service.

effort. Only "For Thy songs, O God!" he cries, "my heart is a harp;" and truly enough, in some of these ancient Hebrew hymns, the stately intensity of which it is impossible to reproduce, we seem to hear clearly the human strings vibrate. The truest faith, the most living hope, the widest charity, is breathed forth in them; and they have naturally been enshrined by his fellow-believers in the most sacred parts of their liturgy, quotations from which would here obviously be out of place. Some dozen lines only shall be given, and these chosen in illustration of the universality of the Jewish hope. "Where can I find Thee, O God?" the poet questions; and there is wonderfully little suggestion of reserved places about the answer:—

"Lord! where art Thou to be found?
Hidden and high is Thy home.
And where shall we find Thee not?
Thy glory fills the world.

Thou art found in my heart,
And at the uttermost ends of the earth.
A refuge for the near,
For the far, a trust.

"The universe cannot contain Thee;
How then a temple's shrine?
Though Thou art raised above men
On Thy high and lofty throne,
Yet art Thou near unto them
In their spirit and in their flesh.
Who can say he has not seen Thee?
When lo! the heavens and their host
Tell of Thy fear, in silent testimony.

"I sought to draw near to Thee.
With my whole heart I sought Thee,
And when I went out to meet Thee,
To meet me, Thou wast ready on the road.
In the wonders of Thy might
And in Thy holiness I have beheld Thee.
Who is there that should not fear Thee?
The yoke of Thy kingdom is for ever and for all,
Who is there that should not call upon Thee?
Thou givest unto all their food."

Concerning Halevi's ideal of love and marriage we may speak at greater length; and on these subjects one may remark that our poet's ideal was less individual than national. Mixing intimately among men who, as a matter of

course, bestowed their fickle favours on several wives, and whose poetic notion of matrimony—on the prosaic we will not touch—was a houri-peopled Paradise, it is perhaps to the credit of the Jews that this was one of the Arabian customs which, with all their susceptibility, they were very slow to adopt. Halevi, as is the general faithful fashion of his race, all his life long loved one only, and clave to her—a "dove of rarest worth, and sweet exceedingly," as in one of his poems he declares her to be. The test of poetry, Goethe somewhere says, is the substance which remains when the poetry is reduced to prose. When the poetry has been yet further reduced by successive processes of translation, the test becomes severe. We fancy, though, that there is still some considerable residuum about Halevi's songs to his old-fashioned love—his Ophrah, as he calls her in some of them. Here is one when

they are likely to be parted for a while :—

" So we must be divided ; sweetest, stay,
Once more, mine eyes would seek thy glance's light.
At night I shall recall thee : Thou, I pray,
Be mindful of the days of our delight.
Come to me in my dreams, I ask of thee,
And even in my dreams be gentle unto me.

" If thou shouldst send me greeting in the grave,
The cold breath of the grave itself were sweet :
Oh, take my life, my life, 'tis all I have,
If it should make thee live, I do entreat.
I think that I shall hear when I am dead,
The rustle of thy gown, thy footsteps over[illegible]

And another, which reads like a [illegible]riage hymn :—

" A dove of rarest worth
And sweet exceedingly ;
Alas, why does she turn
And fly so far from me?
In my fond heart a tent,
Should aye preparèd be.
My poor heart she has caught
With magic spells and wiles.
I do not sigh for gold,
But for her mouth that smiles ;
Her hue it is so bright,
She half makes blind my sight,
* * * *

The day at last is here
Filled full of love's sweet fire ;
The twain shall soon be one,
Shall stay their fond desire.
Ah ! would my tribe could chance
On such deliverance." (1)

On a first reading, these last two lines strike one as oddly out of place in a love poem. But as we look again, they seem to suggest, that in a nature so full and wholesome as Halevi's, love did not lead to a selfish forgetfulness, nor marriage mean a joy which could hold by its side no care for others. Rather to prove that love at its best does not narrow the sympathies, but makes them widen and broaden out to enfold the less fortunate under its happy, brooding wings. And though at the crowning moment of his life Halevi could spare a tender thought for his "tribe," with very little right could the foolish, favourite epithet of "tribalism" be flung at him, and with even less of justice at his race. In truth, they were

"patriots" in the sorriest, sincerest sense —this dispossessed people, who owned not an inch of the lands wherein they wandered, from the east unto the west. It is prejudice or ignorance maybe, but certainly it is not history, which sees the Jews as any but the faithfullest of citizens to their adopted States; faithful, indeed, often to the extent of forgetting, save in set and prayerful phrases, the lost land of their fathers. Here is a typical national song of the twelfth century, in which no faintest echo of regret or of longing for other glories, other shrines, can be discerned:—

"I found that words could ne'er express
The half of all its loveliness;
From place to place I wandered wide,
With amorous sight unsatisfied,
Till last I reached all cities' queen,
Tolaitola[1] the fairest seen.

* * * *

Her palaces that show so bright
In splendour, shamed the starry height,

[1] Hebrew for Toledo.

Whilst temples in their glorious sheen
Rivalled the glories that had been ;
With earnest reverent spirit there,
The pious soul breathes forth its prayer."

The "earnest reverent spirit" may be a little out of drawing now, but that "fairest city seen" of the Spanish poet,[1] might well stand for the London or Paris of to-day in the well-satisfied, cosmopolitan affections of an ordinary Englishman or Frenchman of the Jewish faith. And which of us may blame this adaptability, this comfortable inconstancy of content? Widows and widowers remarry, and childless folks, it is said, grow quite foolishly fond of adopted kin. With practical people the past is past, and to the prosperous nothing comes more easy than forgetting. After all—

" What can you do with people when they are dead?
But if you are pious, sing a hymn and go ;
Or, if you are tender, heave a sigh and go.
But go by all means, and permit the grass
To keep its green fend 'twixt them and you,"[2]

---

[1] Alcharisi. [2] E. B. Browning.

In the long centuries since Jerusalem fell there has been time and to spare for the green grass to wither into dusty weeds above those desolate dead whose "place knows them no more." That Halevi with his "poetic heart," which is a something different from the most metrical of poetic imaginations, cherished a closer ideal of patriotism than some of his brethren may not be denied. "Israel among the nations," he writes, "is as the heart among the limbs." He was the loyalest of Spanish subjects, yet Jerusalem was to him, in sober fact, "the city of the world."

In these learned latter days, the tiniest crumbs of tradition have been so eagerly pounced upon by historians to analyze and argue over, that we are almost left in doubt whether the very A B C of our own history may still be writ in old English characters. The process which has bereft the bogy uncle of our youthful

belief of his hump, and all but tra[illegible] formed the Bluebeard of the British throne into a model monarch, has not spared to set its puzzling impress on the few details which have come down to us concerning Halevi. Whether the love poems, some eight hundred in number, were all written to his wife, is now questioned; whether 1086 or 1105 is the date of his birth, and if Toledo or Old Castille be his birthplace, is contested. Whether he came to a peaceful end, or was murdered by wandering Arabs, is left doubtful, since both the year of his death [1] and the manner of it, are stated in different ways by different authorities, among whom it is hard to choose. Whether, indeed, he ever visited the Holy City, whether he beheld it with "actual sight or sight of faith," is greatly and gravely debated; but amidst all the bewildering dust of doubt

[1] No authority gives it later than 1140.

t the researches of wise commentators have raised, the central fact of his life is left to us undisputed. The realities they meddle with, but the ideals, happily, they leave to us undimmed. All at least agree, that "she whom the Rabbi loved was a poor woe-begone darling, a moving picture of desolation, and her name was Jerusalem." There is a consensus of opinion among the critics that this often-quoted saying of Heine's was only a poetical way of putting a literal and undoubted truth. On this subject, indeed, our poet has only to speak for himself.

"Oh! city of the world, most chastely fair;
In the far west, behold I sigh for thee.
And in my yearning love I do bethink me,
Of bygone ages; of thy ruined fane,
Thy vanished splendour of a vanished day.
Oh! had I eagles' wings I'd fly to thee,
And with my falling tears make moist thine earth.
I long for thee; what though indeed thy kings
Have passed for ever; though where once up-rose
Sweet balsam-trees the serpent makes his nest.
Oh! that I might embrace thy dust, the sod
Were sweet as honey to my fond desire." (1)

Fifty translations cannot spoil the true ring in such fervid words as these. And in a world so sadly full of "fond desires," destined to remain for ever unfulfilled, it is pleasant to know that Halevi accomplished his. He unquestionably travelled to Palestine; whether his steps were stayed short of Jerusalem we know not, but he undoubtedly reached the shores, and breathed "the air of that land which makes men wise," as in loving hyperbole, a more primitive patriot [1] expresses it.

And seeing how that "the Lord God doth like a printer who setteth the letters backward," [2] there is small cause, perchance, for grieving in that the breath our poet drew in the land of his dreams was the breath not of life but of death.

[1] Rabbi Seira.

[2] "The Lord God doth like a printer who setteth the letters backward; we see and feel well His setting, but the print we shall see yonder in the life to come."—LUTHER'S "Table Talk."

THE STORY OF A STREET.

To the ear and eye that can find sermons in stones, streets, one would fancy, must be brimful of suggestive stories. There might be differences of course. From a stone of the polished pebble variety, for instance, one could only predict smooth platitudes, and the romance in a block of regulation stucco would possibly turn out a trifle prosaic. But the right stone and the right street will always have an eloquence of their own for the right listener or lounger, and certain crumbling old tenements which were carted away as rubbish a year or two back in Frankfort must have been

rarely gifted in this line. "Words of fire," and "written in blood," would, in truth, have no parabolic meaning, if the stones of that ancient *Judengasse* suddenly took to story-telling. A long record of sorrow, and wrong, and squalid romance, would be unfolded, and, inasmuch as the sorrows have been healed and the wrongs have been righted, it may not be uninteresting to look for a moment at the picturesque truths that lie hidden under that squalid romance, which, like a mist, hung for centuries over the Jews' quarter.

The very first authentic record of the presence of Jews in Frankfort comes to us in the account of a massacre of some hundred and eighty of them in 1241. This persecution was probably epidemic rather than indigenous in its nature, its germ distinctly traceable to those conscientious and comprehensive attempts of Louis the Saint, in the pre-

ceding year, to stamp out Judaism in his dominions. At any rate, for German Jews, an era of protection began under Frederick Barbarossa, and the Frankfort Jews among the rest, during the next hundred years, enjoyed the "no history" which to the Jewish nation, pre-eminently amongst all others, must have been synonymous with happiness. But the story begins again about the middle of the fourteenth century when the Black Plague raged, and sanitary inspection, old style, took the form of declaring the wells to be poisoned, and of advising the burning and plunder of Jews by way of antidote. Jews were prolific, their hoards portable, their houses slightly built, so the burnings and the massacres and the liftings become intermittent and a little difficult to localise, till about the year 1430, when Frederick III., egged on by his clergy, made an order for all Jews in Frankfort to reside out of sight

and sound of the holy Cathedral. A site just without the ancient walls of the town, and belonging to the council, was allotted to them, and here, at their own expense, the Jews built their *Judengasse*.

The street contained originally some hundred and ninety-six houses, and iron-sheeted gates, kept fast closed on Sundays and saint days, grew gradually to be barred from inside as well as outside on the Ghetto. The pleasures and the hopes which Jews might not share they came by slow degrees to hate and to despise, and the men with the yellow badges on their garments learnt to cringe and stoop under their load, and the dark-eyed women with the blue stripes to their veils lifted them only to look upon their children. Undeniably, by every outward test, the poor pariahs of the Ghetto were degenerate, and their sad and sordid lives must have looked both repellent and unpicturesque

to the passer-by. But it may be doubted whether the degeneracy went much deeper than the costume. If the passer-by had passed in to one of these gabled dwellings, when the degrading gaberdine and the disfiguring veil were thrown aside, he would have come upon an interior of home life which would have struck him as strangely incongruous with the surroundings. Amid all the wretched physical squalor of the street he would have found little mental and less spiritual destitution. If the law of the land bid Jews shrink before men, the law of the Book bid them rejoice before God. Both laws they obeyed to the letter. Beating vainly at closed doors, they learnt to speak to the world with bated breath and whispered humbleness, but "His courts" they entered, as it was commanded them, "with thanksgiving," and "joyfully" sang hymns to Him. And the "courts" came to be compre-

hensive of application, and the "hymns" to include much literature. There was always a vivid domestic side to the religion of the Jews, and the alchemy of home life went far to turn the dross of the Ghetto into gold. Their Sabbath, in the picturesque phrase of their prayer-book, was "a bride," and her welcome, week by week, was of a right bridal sort. White cloths were spread and lamps lit in her honour. The shabbiest dwellings put on something of a festive air, and for "*Shobbus*" the poorest *haus frau* would manage to have ready at least one extra dish and several best and bright-coloured garments for her family. On the seventh day and on holy days the slouching peddler and hawker fathers, with their packs cast off, were priests and teachers too, and every day the Ghetto children, for all their starved and stunted growth, had unlimited diet from the *Judengasse* stores of family affection

and free schooling. They were probably, however, at no time very numerous, these Ghetto babies, for up to a quite comparatively recent date (1832) Jewish love affairs were strictly under State control, and only fifteen couples a year were allowed to marry.

Ludwig Börne, or Löb Baruch as he is registered in the Frankfort synagogue (1786), was a result of one of these eagerly-sought privileges, and it is easy to see how he came to write, "Because I was born a slave I understand liberty; my birthplace was no longer than the *Judengasse*, and beyond its locked gates a foreign country began for me. Now, no town, no district, no province can content me. I can rest only with all Germany for my fatherland." An eloquent expression enough of the repressed patriotism which was, perforce, inarticulate for centuries in the *Judengasse* of Frankfort.

Prison as the street must have seemed

to its tenants, there was at least one occasion when its gates had the charms rather than the defects appertaining to bolts and bars. In 1498, a harassed, ragged little crowd from Nuremberg fled from their persecutors to find in our Frankfort *Judengasse* a safe city of refuge, and for a century or more the Imperial coat-of-arms was gratefully emblazoned on the Ghetto gates as a sign to the outer world that the Frankfort Jews, though imprisoned, were protected. Yet we may fairly doubt if the feeling of security could have been much more than skin-deep, since in 1711, when nearly the whole of the street was burnt down, we find that some of the poor souls were so afraid of insult and plunder, that many refused to open their doors to would-be rescuers, and so, to prevent being pillaged, perished in the flames. An oddly pathetic prose version of the famous Ingoldsby martyr, who "could

stand dying, but who couldn't stand pinching."

When, in 1808, Napoleon made Frankfort the capital of his new grand duchy, the Ghetto gates were demolished, and many vexatious restrictions were repealed. Such new hopes, however, as the Frankfort Jews may have begun to indulge, fell with Napoleon's downfall in 1815. Civil and political disabilities were revived, and it was not till 1854 that the last of these were erased from the statute-book.

The one house in that sad old street, the stirring sermons in whose stones might be "good in everything," would be No. 148, the little low-browed dwelling with the sign of the Rose and Star —a veritable Rose of Dawn it has proved—which was purchased more than a hundred years ago [in 1780] by Meyer Amschel Rothschild, the founder of the great Rothschild house. Every one

knows the fairy-like story of that old house; how Meyer Amschel, intended by his parents to be a rabbi, as many of his ancestors had been before him, chose for himself a different way of helping his fellow-men; how he went into commerce, and made commerce, even in the Ghetto, dignified and honourable, as he would have made chimney-sweeping if he had adopted it; how he became agent to the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, how faithfully he discharged his stewardship, and how his money took to itself snow-ball properties, and changed the tiny *Judengasse* tenement into gorgeous mansions. And the old stones would tell, too, of how faithful were the old merchant prince and the wife of his youth to early associations; how sons and daughters grew up and married, and moved to more aristocratic neighbourhoods, but how Meyer Amschel and his old wife clung to the shabby old home in

the Ghetto, and lived there all their lives, and till she died, some forty years ago.[1] The very iron bars of those windows would speak if they could, saying never a word of their old bad uses, but telling only how kind and wrinkled hands were stretched out through them day by day, and year after year, dealing out bread to the hungry. No. 148 could certainly tell the prettiest story in all the street, and preach the most suggestive line in all the sermons carted away with the stones of the Frankfort *Judengasse.* And it would be a story with a sequel. For when all the other sad old houses were demolished, the walls and rafters of No. 148 were carefully collected and numbered, and for a while reverently laid aside. And now, re-erected, the house stands close by its old site, serving as the

[1] Gütle Rothschild, née Schnapper, died May 7, 1849. Her eldest son, Amschel Meyer Rothschild, was born June 12, 1773, died December 6, 1855.

centre or depôt for the dispensing of the Rothschild charities in Frankfort. Fanciful folks might almost be tempted to believe that stones with such experiences would be sufficiently sentient to rejoice at the sentiment which refused to let them perish, and which, regarding them as relics, built them up afresh, and consecrated them to new and noble uses.

HEINRICH HEINE: A PLEA.

"That blackguard Heine."—CARLYLE.
"'Who was Heine?' A wicked man."
CHARLES KINGSLEY.

THERE are some persons, some places, some things, which fall all too easily into ready-made definitions. Labels lie temptingly to hand, and specimens get duly docketed — "rich as a Jew," perhaps, or "happy as a king"—with a promptitude and a precision which is not a trifle provoking to people of a nicely discriminative turn of mind. The amiable optimism which insists on an inseparable union between a Jew and his money, and discerns an alliterative

link between kings and contentment, or makes now and again a monopoly of the virtues by labelling them "Christian," has, we suspect, a good deal to do with the manufacture of debateable definitions, and the ready fitting of slop-made judgments. Scores of such shallow platitudes occur to one's memory, some mischievous, some monotonous, some simply meaningless, and many of the most complacent have been tacked on to the telling of a life story, brimful of contradictions, and running counter to most of the conventionalities. The story of one who was a Jew, and poor; a convert, without the zeal; a model of resignation, and yet no Christian; a poet, born under sternest conditions of prose, and with sad claims, by right of race, to the scorn of scorn and hate of hate, which we have been told is exclusively a poet's appanage—surely a story hardly susceptible of being summed up

in an epithet. It is a life which has been told often, in many languages, and in much detail; this small sketch will glance only at such portions of it as seem to suggest the clue to a juster reading and a kindlier conclusion.

It was in the last month of the last year of the eighteenth century, in the little town of Dusseldorf in South Germany, that their eldest son Heinrich, or Harry as he seems to have been called in the family circle, was born unto Samson Heine, dealer in cloth, and Betty his wife. That eighteenth century had been but a dreary one for the Jews of Europe. It set in darkness on Heine's cradle, and on his "mattress grave," some fifty years later, the dawn of nineteenth century civilisation, for them, had scarcely broken. "The heaviest burden that men can lay upon us," wrote Spinoza, "is not that they persecute us with their hatred and scorn, but it is by

the planting of hatred and scorn in our souls. That is what does not let us breathe freely or see clearly." This subtlest effect of the poison of persecution seemed to have entered the Jewish system. Warned off from the high-roads of life, and shunned for shambling along its bye-paths, the banned and persecuted race, looking out on the world from their ghettos, had grown to see most things in false perspective. Self loomed large on their blank horizon, and gold shone more golden in the gloom. God the Father, whose service demanded such daily sacrifice, had lost something of that divinest attribute; men, our brothers, could the words have borne any but a "tribal" sound? Still, in those dim, dream-peopled ghettos, where visions of the absent, the distant, and the past must have come to further perplex and confuse the present, one actuality seems to have been grasped

among the shadows, one ideal attained amid all the grim realities of that most miserable time. Home life and family affection had a sacredness for the worst of these poor sordid Jews in a sense which, to the best of those sottish little German potentates who so conscientiously despised them, would have been unmeaning. Maidens were honourably wed, and wives honoured and children cherished in those wretched Judenstrassen, where "the houses look as if they could tell sorrowful stories," after a fashion quite unknown at any, save the most exceptional, of the numerous coarse, corrupt, and ludicrously consequential little courts which were, at that period, representative of German culture.

The marriage of Heine's parents had been one of those faithful unions, under superficially unequal conditions for which Jews seem to have a genius. It had

been something of the old story, "she was beautiful, and he fell in love;" she, pretty, piquant, cultivated, and daughter of a physician of some standing; he, just a respectable merchant of a respectable trading family, and ordinary all round, save for the distinction of one rich relative, a banker brother at Hamburg.

Betty's attractions, however, were all dangerous and undesirable possessions in the eyes of a prudent Jewish parent of the period, and Dr. von Geldern appears to have gladly given this charming daughter of his into the safe ownership of her somewhat commonplace wooer, whose chiefest faculty would seem to have been that of appreciation. It proved, nevertheless, a sufficiently happy marriage, and Betty herself, although possibly rather an acquiescent daughter than a responsive bride in the preliminaries, developed into a faithful wife and

a most devoted mother, utilizing her artistic tastes and her bright energy in the education of her children, and finding full satisfaction for her warm heart in their affection. Her eldest born was always passionately attached to her, and in the days of his youth, as in the years that so speedily "drew nigh with no pleasure in them," unto those latest of the "evil days" when he lay so unconscionably long a-dying, and wrote long playful letters to her full of tender deceit, telling of health and wealth and friends, in place of pain and poverty and disease, through all that bitter, brilliant life of his Heinrich Heine's relations with his mother were altogether beautiful, and go far to refute the criticism attributed, with I know not how much of truth, to Goethe, that "the poet had every capacity save that for love!" "In real love, as in perfect music," says Bulwer Lytton in one of his novels, "there must

be a certain duration of time." He[illegible] attachment to his mother was jus[illegible] long; his first love he never forgot, nor, indeed, wholly forgave, and his devotion to his grisette wife not only preceded marriage, but survived it. Poor Heine! was it his genius or his race, or something of both, which conferred on him that fatal *pierre de touche* as regards reputation, "*il déplait invariablement à tous les imbeciles*"?

In the very early boyhood of Heine some light had broken in on the thick darkness, social and political, which enveloped Jewish fortunes. It was only a fitful gleam from the meteor-like course of the first Napoleon, but during those few years when, as Heine puts it, "all boundaries were dislocated," the Duchy of Berg, and its capital Düsseldorf, in common with more important states, were created French, and the Code Napoléon took the place for

a while of that other, unwritten, code in which Jews were pariahs, to be condemned without evidence, and sentenced without appeal. Although the French occupation of Berg lasted unluckily but a few years (1806 till 1813), it did wonders in the way of individual civilization, and Joachim Murat, during his governorship, seems really to have succeeded in introducing something of the "sweet pineapple odour of politeness," which Heine later notes as a characteristic of French manners, into the boorish, beerish little German principality. Although the time was all too short, and the conscription too universal for much national improvement to become evident, German burghers as well as German Jews had cause to rejoice in the change of rule. We hear of no "noble" privileges, no licensed immunities nor immoralities during the term of the French occupation, and

some healthier amusements than Jew-baiting were provided for the populace. With the departure of the French troops the clouds, which needed the storm of the '48 revolution to be effectually dispersed, gathered again. Still the foreign government, short as it was, had lasted long enough to make an impression for life on Heinrich Heine, and its most immediate effect was in the school influences it brought to bear upon him. Throughout all the States brought under French control, public education, by the Imperial edict of 1808, was settled on one broad system, and put under the general direction of the French Minister of Instruction. In accordance with this decree some suitable building in each selected district had to be utilized for class-rooms, the students had to be put into uniform, the teachers to be Frenchmen, and all subjects had to be taught through the medium of that language.

The lycée at Dusseldorf was set up in an ancient Franciscan convent, and hither, at the age of ten, was Heine daily despatched. A bright little auburn-haired lad, full of fun and mischief, and mother-taught up to this date save for some small amount of Hebrew drilling which he seems to have received at the hands of a neighbouring Jewish instructor of youth, Harry had everything to learn, and discipline and the Latin declensions were among the first and greatest of his difficulties. Poet nature and boy nature were both strong in him, and it was so hard to sit droning out long dull lists of words, which he was quite sure the originators of them had never had to do, for "if the Romans had had first to learn Latin," he ruminated, "they never would have had time to conquer the world"—so impossible he found it to keep his eyes on the page, whilst the very motes were dancing in the sunshine

as it poured in through the old convent window, which was set just too high in the wall for a safe jump into freedom. One day the need of sympathy, and possibly some unconscious association from the dim old cloister, proved momentarily too strong for the impressionable little lad's Jewish instincts; he came across a crucifix in some forgotten niche of the transformed convent; he looked up, he tells us, at the roughly-carved figure, and dropping on his knees, prayed an earnest heterodox prayer, "Oh, Thou poor once persecuted God, do help me, if possible, to keep the irregular verbs in my head!"

"Jewish instincts," we said, and they could have been scarcely more, for neither at home, at school, nor in the streets was the atmosphere the boy breathed favourable to the development of religious principles. The Judaism of that age was, superficially, very much

what the age had made of it; and its followers and its persecutors alike combined to render it mightily unattractive to susceptible natures. Samson Heine, stolid and respectable, we may imagine doing his religious, as he did all his other duties and avocations, in solemn routine fashion, laying heavy honest hands on each prose detail, and letting every bit of poetic meaning slip through his fat fingers, whilst his bright eager wife, with her large ideas and her small vanities, ruled her household, and read her Rousseau, and, feeling the outer world shut from her by religion, and the higher world barred from her by ritual, found the whole thing cramping and unsatisfying to the last degree. "Happy is he whom his mother teacheth" runs an old Talmudic proverb, but among the mother-taught lessons of his childhood, the best was missing to Heinrich Heine —the real difference between "holy and

profane" he never rightly learnt, and thus it came to pass that Jewish instincts —an ineradicable and an inalienable, but alas! an incomplete inheritance of the sons of Israel—were all that Judaism gave to this poet of Jewish race.

One lingers over these early influences, the right understanding of which goes far to supply the key to some of the later puzzles. Oddly enough, the clouds which by and by hid the blue are discernible from the very first, and these early years give the silver lining to those gathering clouds. In view of the dark days coming one at least rejoices that Heine's childhood was a happy one; at home the merry, mischievous boy was quite a hero to his two younger brothers, and a hero and a companion both to his only sister, the Löttchen who was the occasion of his earliest recorded composition. It is a favourite recollection of this lady, who is living still, [1] how she, a

[1] Written in 1882.

blushing little maid of ten, won a good deal of unmerited praise for a school theme till a trembling confession was extorted from her that the real author was her brother Harry. His mother too was exceedingly proud of her handsome eldest son, whose resemblance in many ways to her was the sweetest flattery. And besides the adoring home circle Harry found a great ally for play hours in an old French ex-drummer, who had marched to victory with Napoleon's legions, and who had plenty of tales to tell the boy of the wonderful invincible Kaiser, whom one day—blest never-to-be-forgotten vision—the boy actually saw ride through Dusseldorf on his famous white steed (1810). Heine never quite lost the glamour cast over him in his youth ; France, Germany, Judea, each in a sense his *patria*, was each, in the time to come, "loved both ways," each in turn mocked at bitterly

enough when the mood was on him, but always with France, the "poet of the nations" as our own English poetess calls her, the sympathies of this cosmopolitan poet were keenest — a perhaps not unnatural state of feeling when we reflect how fact and fiction both combined to produce it. The French occupation of the principality had been a veritable deliverance to its inhabitants, Christian and Jewish alike, and what boy, in his own person, led out of bondage, would not have thrilled to such stories as the old drummer had to tell of the real living hero of it all? And the boy in question we must bear in mind was a poet *in posse*.

In school, in spite of the difficulties with the irregular verbs, Harry seems to have held his own, and to have soon attracted the especial attention of the director. The chief selected for the lycée at Dusseldorf had happened to be

a Roman Catholic Abbé of decidedly Voltairian views on most subjects, and attracted by the boy and becoming acquainted with his family, many a talk did Abbé Schallmayer have with Frau Heine over the undoubted gifts and the delightful imperfections of her son. It may possibly have been altogether simple interest in his bright young pupil, or perhaps Frau Heine, pretty still, and charming always, was herself an attraction to the schoolmaster, but certain it is, whether a private taste for pretty women or a genuine pedagogic enthusiasm prompted his frequent calls, our Abbé was a constant visitor at Samson Heine's, and Harry and Harry's future a never-failing theme for conversation. What was the boy to be? There was no room for much speculation if he were to remain a Jew—that path was narrow, if not straight, and admitted of small range of choice along its level line of commerce.

Betty, we know, was no staunch Jewess, and had her small personal ambitions to boot, so such opposition as there was to the Abbé's plainly given counsel to make a Catholic of the boy, and give him his chance, came probably from the stolid, steady-going father, to whom custom spoke in echoes resonant enough to deaden the muffled tones of religion. No question however, of sentiment or sacrifice was permitted to complicate, or elevate, the question; no sense of voluntary renunciation was suggested to the boy; no choice between the life and good, and the death and evil, between conscience and compromise, was presented to him. On the broadly comprehensive grounds that Judaism and trade had been good enough for the father, trade and Judaism must be good enough for the son—the matter was decided.

But still before the lad's prospects

could be definitively settled, one important personage remained to be consulted, the banker at Hamburg, whose wealth had gained him somewhat of the position of a family fetish. What Uncle Solomon would say to a scheme had no fictitious value about it; for even were the oracle occasionally dumb, not seldom would its speech be silver and its silence gold. A rich uncle is a very solemn possession in an impecunious family, so Harry and Harry's poetry, and Harry's powers generally, had to be weighed in the Hamburg scales before any standard value could be assigned to either one of them. For three years the balance was held doubtful; the counting-house scales, accurate as they usually were, could hardly adjust themselves to the conditions of an unknown quantity, which "young Heine" on an office stool must certainly have proved to his bewildered relatives. One imagines

him in that correct and cramping atmosphere, fretting as he had done in the old convent school days against its weary routine, longing with all the half understood strength of his poet nature for the green hills and the mountain lakes, and feeling absolutely stifled with all the solemn interest shown over sordid matters. He tells us himself of some of his "calculations" which would wander far afield, and leave the figures on the paper to concern themselves with the far more perplexing units which passed the mirky office windows, as he complains, "at the same hour, with the same mien, making the same motions, like the puppets in a town house clock—reckoning, reckoning always on the basis, twice two are four. Frightful should it ever suddenly occur to one of these people that twice two are properly five, and that he therefore had miscalculated his whole life and squandered it all away in a

ghastly error"! Many a poem too, sorrowful or fantistic, as the mood took him, was scribbled in office hours, and very probably on office paper, thence to find a temporary home in the Hamburg *Watchman*. What could be done with such a lad? By every office standard he must inevitably have been found wanting, and one even feels a sort of sympathy with the prosaic head of the house who had made his money by the exercise of such very different talents, and whose notion of poetry corresponded very nearly with Corporal Bunting's notion of love, that it's by no means "the great thing in life boys and girls want to make it out to be—that one does not eat it, nor drink it, and as for the rest, why it's bother." It always was "bother" to the banker: all through his prosperous life this poet nephew of his, who had the prophetic impertinence to tell the old man once that he owed

him some gratitude for being born his uncle, and for bearing his name, was an unsatisfactory riddle. Original genius of the sort which could create a bank-book *ex nihilo*, the millionaire could have appreciated, but originality which ran into such unproductive channels as poetry-book making was quite beyond him, and that he never read the young man's verses it is needless to say. Even in his own immediate family and for his first book poor Harry found no audience, save his mother; and to the very end of his days Solomon Heine for the life of him could see nothing in his nephew but a *dumme Junge*, who never "got on," and who made a jest of most things, even of his wealthy and respectable relatives.

It was scarcely the old man's fault; one can only see to the limits of one's vision, and a poet's soul was not well within Samson Heine's range. According

to his lights he was not ungenerous. That Harry had not the making of a clerk in him, those three probationary years had proved to demonstration, and in the determination at which the banker presently arrived, of giving those indefinite talents which he only understood enough to doubt, a chance of development by paying for a three years' university course at Bonn, he seems to have come fully up to any reasonable ideal of a rich uncle. It is just possible that a secondary motive influenced his generosity, for Harry, besides scribbling, had found a relief from office work by falling in love with one of the banker's daughters who would seem not to have shared the family distaste for poetry. The little idyl was of course out of the question in so realistic a circle, and the young lady, to do her justice, seems herself to have been speedily reconverted to the proper principles in which she had been

trained. No unfit pendant to the "Amy, shallow-hearted" with whom a more recent generation is more familiar, this Cousin Amy of poor Heine's married and "kept her carriage" with all due despatch, whilst he, at college, was essaying to mend his "heart broken in two" with all the styptics which are as old and, alas, as hurtful as such fractures. Poetical exaggeration notwithstanding—and besides her own especial love-elegy, Amalie Heine, under thin disguises, is the heroine of very many of the love poems—there is little room for doubt, that if not so seriously injured as he thought, Heine's heart did nevertheless receive a wound, which ached for many and many a long day, from this girl's weak or wilful inconstancy. Heartache is, however, nearly as much a matter-of-course episode in most young people's lives as measles, and the consequences of either malady are only very exceptionally serious.

Heine's youthful disappointment is of chief interest as having indirectly led to what was really the determining event of his life. When Amalie's parents shrewdly determined on separation as the best course to be pursued with the cousins, and the university plan had been accepted by Harry, his future, which was to date from degree taking, came on for discussion. Except in an "other-worldly" sense there was, in truth, but a very limited "future" possible to Jews of talent. The only open profession was that of medicine, and for that, like the son of Moses Mendelssohn, young Heine had a positive distaste. Commerce, that first and final resource of the race, which had had to satisfy Joseph Mendelssohn, like a good many others equally ill-fitted for it, was not possible to Heine, for he had sufficiently shown, not only dislike, but positive incapacity for business routine.

The law suggested itself, as affording an excellent arena for those ready powers of argument and repartee which in the family circle were occasionally embarrassing, and the profession of an advocate, with the vague "opportunities" it included, when pressed upon young Heine, was not unalluring to him. The immediate future was probably what most occupied his thoughts; the freedom of a university life, the flowing river in place of those bustling streets, shelves full of books exchanged for those dreary office ledgers, youthful comrades in the stead of solemnly irritated old clerks. Whether the fact that conversion was a condition of most of the delights, an inevitable preliminary of all the benefits of that visionary future; whether the grim truth that "a certificate of baptism was a necessary card of admission to European culture," was openly debated and defended, or silently and shamefacedly

slurred over in these family councils, does not appear. No record remains to us but the fact that the young student successfully passed his examination in May, 1825; that he was admitted to his degree on July 20, and that between these two dates—to be precise, on the 28th of June—he was baptised as a Protestant with two clergymen for his sponsors. "Lest I be poor and deny thee" was Agur's prayer, and a wise one; for shivering Poverty, clutching at the drapery of Desire, makes unto herself many a fine, mean, flimsy garment. With no gleam of conviction to cast a flickering halo of enthusiasm over the act and with no shadow of overwhelming circumstance to somewhat veil it, Heine made his deliberate surrender of conscience to expediency. It was full-grown apostasy, neither conscientious conversion, nor childish drifting into another faith. "No man's soul is alone,"

Ruskin tells us in his uncompromising way, "Laocoon or Tobit, the serpent has it by the heart or the angel by the hand." For the rest of his life Heine was in the grip of the serpent, and that, it seems to us, was the secret of his perpetual unrest. Maimed lives are common enough; blind or deaf, or minus a leg or an arm, or plus innumerable bruises, one yet goes on living, and with the help of time and philosophy sorrow of most sorts grows bearable. Hearts are tough; but the soul is more sensitive to injuries, is, to many of us, the veritable, vulnerable *tendo Achillis* on which our mothers lay their tender, detaining, unavailing hands. Heine sold his soul, and that he never received the price must have perpetually renewed the memory of the bargain. He, one of the "body-guards of Jehovah," had suffered himself to be bribed from his post. He never lost the sickening

sense of his humiliation ; it may be read between the lines, alike of the most brilliant of his prose, of the most tender of his poems, of the most mocking of his often quoted jests.

"They have told thee a-many stories,
And much complaint have made;
And yet my heart's true anguish
That never have they said.

"They shook their heads protesting,
They made a great to-do ;
They called me a wicked fellow,
And thou believedst it true.

"And yet the worst of all things,
Of that they were not aware,
The darkest and the saddest,
That in my heart I bear."[1]

And it was a burden he never laid down; it embittered his relationships and jeopardized his friendships, and set him at variance with himself. "I get up in the night and look in the glass

[1] The translation is by Miss Amy Levy.

and curse myself," we find him writing to one of his old Jewish fellow-workers in the New Jerusalem movement (Moser), or checking himself in the course of a violent tirade against converts, in which Börne had joined, to bitterly exclaim, "It is ill talking of ropes in the house of one who has been hanged." Wherever he treats of Jewish subjects, and the theme seems always to have had for him the fascination which is said to tempt sinners to revisit the scene of their sins, we seem to read remorse between the melodious, mocking lines. Now it is Moses Lump who is laughed at in half tones of envy for his ignorant unbarterable belief in the virtue of unsnuffed candles; now it is Jehudah Halevi, whose love for the mistress, the *Herzensdame*, "whose name was Jerusalem," is sung with a sympathy and an intensity impossible to one who had not felt a like passion, and was not

bitterly conscious of having forfeited the right to avow it. The sense of his moral mercenary suicide, in truth, rarely left him. His nature was too conscientious for the strain thus set upon it; his "wickedness" and "blackguardism," such as they were, were often but passionate efforts to throw his old man of the sea, his heavy burden of self-reproach, and his jests sound not unseldom as so many untranslateable cries. He had bargained away his birthright for the hope of a mess of pottage, and the evil taste of the base contract clung to the poor paralyzed lips when "even kissing had no effect upon them." And but a thin, unsatisfying, and terribly intermittent "mess," too, it proved, and the share in it which his uncle, and his uncle's heirs, provided was very bitter in the eating. The story of his struggles, are they not written in the chronicles of the immortals? and his "monument," is it not standing

yet "in the new stone premises of his publishers?" [1]

His biographers—his niece, the Princessa della Rocca, among the latest—have made every incident of Heine's life as familiar as his own books have made his genius to English readers, and Mr. Stigand, following Herr Strodtman, has given us an exhaustive record of the poet's life at home and in exile; in the Germany which was so harsh and in the France which was so tender with him; with the respectable German relatives, who read his books at last and were none the wiser, and with the unlettered French wife, who could not read a single word of them all, and who yet understood her poet by virtue of the love which passeth understanding, and was in this case entirely independent of

[1] Messrs. Campe and Hoffmann erected their new offices during the publication (not too well paid) of the poet's works.

it. This sketch trenches on no such well-filled ground; it presumes to touch only on the fault which gave to life and genius both that odd pathetic twist, and to glance at the suffering, which, if there be any saving power in anguish, might surely be held by the most self-righteous as some atonement for the "black-guardism."

> "Oh! not little when pain
> Is most quelling, and man
> Easily quelled, and the fine
> Temper of genius so soon
> Thrills at each smart, is the praise
> Not to have yielded to pain."[1]

Seven years on the rack is no small test of the heroic temperament; to lie sick and solitary, stretched on a "mattress grave," the back bent and twisted, the legs paralyzed, the hands powerless, and with the senses of sight and taste

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Heinrich Heine.*

fast failing. At any time within that seven years Heine might well have gained the gold medal in capability of suffering for which, in his whimsical way, he talked of competing, should such a prize be offered at the Paris Exhibition.[1] And the long days, with "no pleasure in them," were so drearily many; the silver cord was so slowly loosed, the golden bowl seemed broken on the wheel. His very friends grew tired. "One must love one's friends with all their failings, but it is a great failing to be ill," says Madame Sevigné, and, as the years went by, more and more deserted grew the sick chamber. He never complained; his sweet, ungrudging nature found excuses for desertion and content in loneliness, in the reflection that he was in truth unconscionably long a-dying. "Never have I seen," says Lady Duff-Gordon, in her

[1] The Exhibition of 1855.

Recollections of Heine, and she herself was no mean exemplar of bravely borne pain, "never have I seen a man bear such horrible pain and misery in so perfectly unaffected a manner. He neither paraded his anguish, nor tried to conceal it, or to put on any stoical airs. He was pleased to see tears in my eyes, and then at once set to work to make me laugh heartily, which pleased him just as much."

"Don't tell my wife," he exclaims one day, when a paroxysm that should have been fatal was not, and the doctor expressed what he meant for a reassuring belief, that it would not hasten the end. "Don't tell my wife"—we seem to hear that sad little jest, so infinitely sadder then a moan, and our own eyes moisten. Perfectly upright geniuses, when suffering from dyspepsia, have not always shown as much consideration for their perfectly proper wives as does this

"blackguard" Heine, under torture, for his. It is conceivable that under exceptional circumstances a man may contrive to be a hero to his valet, but, unless he be truly heroic, he will not be able to keep up the character to his wife. Heine managed both. Madame Heine is still living[1] and one may not say much of a love that was truly strong as death, and that the many waters of affliction could not quench. But the valet test, we may hint, was fulfilled; for the old servant who helped to tend him in that terrible illness lives still with Madame Heine, and cries "for company" when the widow's talk falls, as it falls often, on the days of her youth and her "*pauvre Henri.*" There are traditional records in plenty of his cheerful courage, his patient unselfishness, his unfailing endurance of well-nigh unendurable pain. "*Dieu me pardonnera, c'est son métier,*"

[1] Written in 1882.

the dying lips part to say, still with that sweet, inseparable smile playing about them. Shall man be more just than God? Shall we leave to Him for ever the monopoly of His *métier*?

DANIEL DERONDA AND HIS JEWISH CRITICS.

George Eliot and Judaism. An attempt to appreciate "Daniel Deronda." By Professor DAVID KAUFMANN, of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Buda-Pesth. Translated from the German by J. W. FERRIER. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons.

THE latest echo from the critical chorus which has greeted "Daniel Deronda" comes to us from Germany, in the form of a small book by Dr. Kaufmann, professor in the recently instituted Jewish Theological Seminary at Buda-Pesth. A certain prominence, which its very excellent translation into English confers upon this work, seems to be due less to any special or novel feature in its criticism

than to the larger purpose shadowed forth in the title, "George Eliot and Judaism." It is advowedly "an attempt to appreciate 'Daniel Deronda,'" and is valuable and interesting to English society not as a critique on the plot or the characters of the book—on which points it strikes us, in more than one instance, as somewhat weak and one-sided—but as indicating from a Jewish stand-point in how far and how truly modern Judaism is therein represented. Unappreciative as the great mass of the reading public have shown themselves to the latest of George Eliot's novels, the work has excited a considerable amount of curiosity and admiration on the ground of the intimate knowledge its author has evinced of the inner lives and of the little-read literature of the "Great Unknown of humanity." We think Dr. Kaufmann goes too far when he says, "The majority of readers

view the world to which they are introduced in 'Daniel Deronda' as one foreign, strange, and repulsive. . . . It is not only the Jew of flesh and blood whom men encounter every day upon the streets that they hate, but the Jew under whatever shape he may appear, and even the airy productions of the poet's fancy are denounced when they venture to take that people as their subject" (p. 92). We think this view concedes too much to prejudice; but it is undoubtedly a fact that the first serious attempt by a great writer to make Jews and Judaism the central interest of a great work, has produced a certain sense of discord on the public ear, and that criticism has for the most part run in the minor key. Mr. Swinburne, perhaps, strikes the most distinctly jarring chord, when, in his lately published "Note on Charlotte Brontë," he owns to possessing "no ear for the melodies of a Jew's harp," and, disclaiming

"a taste for the dissection of dolls," "leaves Daniel Deronda to his natural place over the rag-shop door" (pp. 21, 22). Even an ear so politely and elegantly owned defective might be able, it could be imagined, to catch an echo from the "choir invisible"; and poetic insight, one might almost venture to think, should be able to discern in poetic aspirations, however unfamiliar and even alien to itself, something different from bran. The arrow is too heavily tipped to fly straight to the goal. There are numbers, however, of the like school who, with more excuse than Mr. Algernon Swinburne, fail to "see anything" in "Daniel Deronda," and a criticism we once overheard in the Louvre occurs to us as pertinent to this point. The picture was Correggio's "Marriage of St. Katharine," and to an Englishman standing near us it evidently did not fulfil preconceived conceptions of a marriage ceremony.

He looked at it long, and at last turned disappointed away, audibly muttering, "Well, I can't see anything in it." That was evident, but the failure was not in the picture. Preconceived conceptions count for much, whether the artist be a Correggio or a George Eliot, and ignorance and prejudice are ill-fitting spectacles wherewith to assist vision.

If it be an axiom that a man should be judged by his peers, we should think that George Eliot would herself prefer that her work should be weighed in the balance by those qualified to hold the scales, and should by them, if at all, be pronounced "wanting." A book of which Judaism is the acknowledged theme should appeal to Jews for judgment, and thus the question becomes an interesting one to the outer world,—What do the Jews themselves think of "Daniel Deronda"? Are the aspirations of Mordecai regarded by them as the expression

of a poet's dream, or a nation's hope? What, in short, is the aspect of modern Judaism to the book?

"Modern" Judaism is itself, perhaps, a convenient rather than a correct figure of speech. There are modern manners to which modern Jews necessarily conform, and which have a tendency to tone down the outward and special characteristics of Judaism, as of everthing else, to a general socially-undistinguishable level. But men are not necessarily dumb because they do not speak much or loudly of such very personal matters as their religious hopes and beliefs, more especially, if in these days, they are so little in the fashion as to hold strong convictions on such subjects. Our author distinctly formulates the opinion that "men may give all due allegiance to a foreign State without ceasing to belong to their own people" (p. 21); and in the same sense as we may conceive a man

honestly fulfilling all dues as good husband and good father to his living and lawful wife and children, and yet holding tenderly in the unguessed-at depths of memory some long-ago-lost love, so is it conceivable of many an unromantic-looking nineteenth century Jew, who soberly performs all good citizen duties, that the unspoken name of Jerusalem is still enshrined in like unguessed-at depths, as the "perfection of beauty," "the joy of the whole earth." Conventionalities conduce to silence on such topics, and therefore it is to published rather than to spoken Jewish criticisms we must turn in our inquiry, and the little book under review certainly helps us to a definite answer.

And we may notice, as a significant fact, that while on the part of general critics there has been some differing even in their adverse judgments, and a more than partial failure to grasp the idea of

the book, there seems both here and abroad a grateful consensus of Jewish opinion that not only has George Eliot truly depicted the externals of Jewish *life*, which was a comparatively easy task, but has also correctly represented Jewish thought and the ideas underlying Judaism. Our author emphatically says, "'Daniel Deronda' is a Jewish book, not only in the sense that it treats of Jews, but also in the sense that it is pre-eminently fitted for being understood and appreciated by Jews" (p. 90); and again, "it will always be gratefully declared," he concludes, "*that George Eliot has deserved right well of Judaism*" (p. 95). Does this, then, mean that the "national" idea is a rooted, practical hope? Do English Jews, undistinguishable in the mass from other Englishmen, really and truly hold the desire, like Mordecai, of "founding a new Jewish polity, grand, simple, just, like the old"? (Daniel

Deronda, Book IV.) Do they indeed design to devote their "wealth to redeem the soil from debauched and paupered conquerors," to cleanse their fair land from "the hideous obloquy of Christian strife, which the Turk gazes at as at the fighting of wild beasts to which he has lent an arena" (*ibidem*)? Was Daniel's honeymoon-mission to the East to have this practical result? The general Jewish verdict, as we read it, scarcely concedes so much; it sees rather in the closing scene of Daniel Deronda the only weak spot in the book. Vague and visionary as are all honeymoon anticipations, those of Daniel, their beauty and unselfishness notwithstanding, strike Jewish readers as even more unsubstantial, even less likely of realization, than such imaginings in general. Possibly, as in the old days of the Babylonian exile, "there be some that dream" of an actual restoration, of a Palestine which

should be the Switzerland of Asia Minor, which, crowned with ancient laurels, might sit enthroned in peace and plenty,—

"Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-Be."

But save with such few and faithful dreamers, memory scarcely blossoms into hope, and hope most certainly has not yet ripened into strong desire. It may come; but at present we apprehend the majority of Jews see the "future of Judaism" not in the form of a centralized and localized nationality, but rather in the destiny foreshadowed by our author, in which "Israel will be greatest when she labours under every zone," when "her children shall have spread themselves abroad, bearing the ineradicable seeds of eternal truth" (pp. 86, 87). This conception of "nationality" would point rather to a spiritual than to a temporal sovereignty, to a supremacy of mind

rather than of matter, and appears to be in accord with the tone pervading both ancient and modern Jewish literature, which exhibits Judaism as a perpetual living force, maintained from within rather than from without, and destined continually to influence religious thought, and to survive all dispensations.

In his undefined mission to the East Deronda is, therefore, to that extent perhaps, out of harmony with the general tone of modern Jewish thought. We at least are constrained to think that more Jews of the present day would be ready to follow Mordecai in imagination than Deronda in person to Judæa. It is, nevertheless, in strict artistic unity that, shut out for five-and-twenty years from actual practical knowledge of his people, Deronda should represent the *ideal* rather than the *idea* of Judaism. Mordecai, sketched as he is supposed to be from the life, with his deep poetic yearnings, which are stayed

on the threshold of action, strikes us as a truer and more typical figure than Deronda hastening to their fulfilment. And on the subject of these same vague yearnings another point suggests itself. We have heard it said that the religious belief of Mordecai centres rather in the destiny of his race than in the Being who has appointed that destiny, and we have heard it questioned whether the theism of Mordecai is sufficiently defined to be fairly representative of Jewish thought, or if Judaism indeed is also passing under that wave of Pantheism which, like the waters of old, is threatening to submerge all ancient landmarks, and to leave visible only "the tops of the mountains" of revealed religion. This seems a criticism based rather on negative than on positive evidence, and derived possibly from the obvious leanings of George Eliot's other writings, and it is, perhaps, somewhat unfair to assume that, even if, on this

point, she does not sympathize with the Jews, she has any intention of colouring her picture of modern Judaism with intellectual prepossessions of her own. In the silence of Mordecai with respect to his beliefs, he represents the great body of Jews, whose religion finds expression rather in action than in formula, and who are slow to indulge in theological speculations. Mordecai was true to Jewish characteristics in the fact that his belief was concealed beneath his hopes and aspirations, but had he in any degree shared the views of the new school of sceptics, he could not have been the typical Jew, who sees in the unity of his people a symbol of the unity of his God.

The pure theism of Judaism may be said to have its poles in the anthropomorphic utterances of some of the Rabbinical writers, and in the present pantheism of the extreme German school; but we should say that the ordinary, the repre-

sentative Jewish thought of the day lies between these two extremes, and, in so far as it gives expression to any belief on the subject, distinctly recognizes a personal God presiding over human destiny and natural laws. There may be here and there an inquiring spirit that wanders so far afield that his attraction towards his people is lost, and with it the influence his genius should exert; but Jewish thought, if owning a somewhat nebulous conception of the Deity, slowly progressing towards one fuller and grander, cannot be said to be drifting towards Pantheism. Judaism, unlike many other faiths, has not a history and a religious belief apart,—the one not only includes and supplements, but is actually non-existent, "unthinkable," without the other. Thus to have made an earnest Jew, with the strong racial instinct of Mordecai, a weak theist, would have been an inartistic conception, and Jewish criticism has not discovered this

flaw in George Eliot's exceptional but faithful Jewish portraiture. Judging then, from such sources as are open to us, we are led to infer that the feeling of nationality is still deeply rooted in the Jewish race, and that the religious feeling from which it is inseparable perhaps gives it the strength and depth to exist and to continue to exist without the external props of "a local habitation and a name." Dr. Kaufmann, therefore, very well expresses what appears to be the general convicton of his co-religionists, when he suggests that "in the very circumstance of dispersion may lie fulfilment" (p. 87).

MANASSEH BEN ISRAEL.

PRINTER AND PATRIOT.

When the prophet of the Hebrews, some six-and-twenty hundred years ago, thundered forth his stirring "Go through! go through the gates! prepare a way, lift up a standard for the people!" it may, without irreverence, be doubted if he foresaw how literally his charge would be fulfilled by one of his own race in the seventeenth century of the Christian era. The story of how it was done may perhaps be worth retelling, since many subjects of lesser moment have found more chroniclers.

It was in 1290 that gates, which in

England had long been ominously creaking on their hinges, were deliberately swung to, and bolted and barred by Church and State on the unhappy Jews, who on that bleak November day stood shivering along the coast. "Thy waves and thy billows have passed over me" must have lost in tender allegory and gained some added force of literalness that wintry afternoon. Scarce any of the descendants of that exodus can have had share in the return. Of such of the refugees as reached the opposite ports few found foothold, and fewer still asylum. The most, and perhaps they were the most fortunate of the fifteen thousand, were quick in gaining foreign graves. Those who made for the nearest neighbouring shores of France, forgetful, or perhaps ignorant, of the recent experiences of their French brethren under Philip Augustus, lived on to earn a like knowledge for them-

selves, and to undergo, a few years later, another expulsion under Philip the Fair. Those who went further fared worse, for over the German States the Imperial eagle of Rome no longer brooded, now to protect and now to prey on its victims; the struggle between the free cities and the multitudinous petty princelings was working to its climax, and whether at bitter strife, or whether pausing for a brief while to recruit their powers, landgrave and burgher, on one subject, were always of one mind. To plunder at need or to persecute at leisure, Jews were held to be handy and fair game for either side.

Far northward or far southward that ragged English mob were hardly fit to travel. Some remnant, perhaps, made effort to reach the semi-barbarous settlements in Russia and Poland, but few can have been sanguine enough to set out for distant Spain in hope of a

welcome but rarely accorded to such very poor relations. And even in the Peninsula the security which Jews had hitherto experienced had by this date received several severe shocks. Two centuries later and the tide of civilization had rolled definitely and drearily back on the soil which Jews had largely helped to cultivate, and left it bare, and yet a little longer, Portugal, become a province of Spain, had followed the cruel fashions of its suzerain.

By the close of the sixteenth century a settlement of the dispossessed Spanish and Portuguese Jews had been formed in Holland, and Amsterdam was growing into a strange Dutch likeness of a new Jerusalem, for Holland alone among the nations at this period gave a welcome to all citizens in the spirit of Virgil's famous line, "*Tros Rutulusve fuat, nullo discrimine habebo.*" And the refugees, who at this date claimed the

hospitality of the States, were of a sort to make the Dutch in love with their own unfashionable virtue of religious tolerance. Under Moorish sway, for centuries, commerce had been but one of the pursuits open to the Jews and followed by the Jews of the Peninsula, and thus it was a crowd, not of financiers and traders only or chiefly, but of cultivated scholars, physicians, statesmen, and land-owners, whom Catholic bigotry had exiled. The thin disguise of new Christians was soon thrown off by these Jews, and they became to real Christians, to such men as Vossius and Caspar Barlæus, who welcomed them and made friends of them, a revelation of Judaism.

It was after the great *auto-da-fe* of January, 1605, that Joseph ben Israel, with a host of other Jews, broken in health and broken in fortune, left the land which bigotry and persecution had

made hideous to them, and joined the peaceful and prosperous settlement in Amsterdam. The youngest of ben Israel's transplanted family was the year-old Manasseh, who had been born in Lisbon a few months before their flight. He seems to have been from the first a promising and intelligent lad, and his tutor, one Isaac Uziel, who was a minister of the congregation, and a somewhat famous mathematician and physician to boot, formed a high opinion of the boy's abilities. He did not, however, live to see them verified; when Manasseh was but eighteen the Rabbi died, and his clever pupil was thought worthy to be appointed to the vacated office. It was an honoured and an honourable, but scarcely a lucrative post, to which Manasseh thus succeeded, and the problem of living soon became further complicated by an early marriage and a young family. Manasseh had to

cast about him for supplementary means of support, and he presently found it in the establishment of a printing press. Whether the type gave impetus to the pen, or whether the pen had inspired the idea of the press, is hard to decide; but it is, at least, certain that before he was twenty-five, Manasseh had found congenial work and plenty of it. He taught and he preached, and both in the school-room and in the pulpit he was useful and effective, but it was in his library that he felt really happy and at home. Manasseh was a born scholar and an omnivorous reader, bound to develop into a prolific, if not a profound writer. The work which first established his fame bears traces of this, and is, in point of fact, less of a composition than a compilation. The first part of this book, "The Conciliator," was published in 1632, after five years' labour had been expended on it, and it is computed

to contain quotations from, or references to, over 200 Hebrew, and 50 Latin and Greek authors. Its object was to harmonise (*conciliador*) conflicting passages in the Pentateuch, and it was written in Spanish, although it could have been composed with equal facility in any one of half-a-dozen other languages, for Manasseh was a most accomplished linguist.

Although not the first book which was issued from his press, for a completely edited prayer-book and a Hebrew grammar had been published in 1627, "The Conciliator" was the first work that attracted the attention of the learned world to the Amsterdam Rabbi. Manasseh had the advantage of literary connections of his own, through his wife, who was a great-granddaughter of Abarbanel—that same Isaac Abarbanel, the scholar and patriot, who in 1490 headed the deputation to Ferdinand and

Isabella, which was so dramatically cut short by Torquemada.

Like "The Conciliator," all Manasseh's subsequent literary ventures met with ready appreciation, but with more appreciation, it would seem, than solid result, for his means appear to have been always insufficient for his modest wants, and in 1640 we find him seriously contemplating emigration to Brazil on a trading venture. Two members of his congregation, which, as a body, does not seem to have acted liberally towards him, came forward, however, at this crisis in his affairs, and conferred a benefit all round by establishing a college and appointing Manasseh the principal, with an adequate salary. This ready use of some portion of their wealth has made the brothers Pereira more distinguished than for its possession. Still, it must not be inferred that Manasseh had been, up to this date, a

friendless, if a somewhat impecunious student, only that, as is rather perhaps the wont of poor prophets in their own country, his admirers had had to come from the outer before they reached the inner circle. He had certainly achieved a European celebrity in the Republic of letters before his friends at Amsterdam had discovered much more than the fact that he printed very superior prayer-books. He had won over, amongst others, the prejudiced author of the "Law of Nations," to own him, a Jew, for a familiar friend, before some of the wealthier heads of his own congregation had claimed a like privilege, and Grotius, then Swedish ambassador at Paris, was actually writing to him, and proffering friendly services, at the very time that the Amsterdam congregation were calmly receiving his enforced farewells. There was something, perhaps, of irony in the situation, but Manasseh, like Maimonides,

had no littleness of disposition, no inflammable self-love quick to take fire; he loved his people truly enough to understand them and to make allowances, had even, perhaps, some humorous perception of the national obtuseness to native talent when unarrayed in purple and fine linen, or until duly recognized by the wearers of such.

Set free, by the liberality of Abraham and Isaac Pereira, from the pressure of everyday cares, Manasseh again devoted himself to his books, and turned out a succession of treatises. History, Philosophy, Theology, he attacked them all in turn, and there is, perhaps, something besides rapidity of execution which suggests an idea of manufacture in most of these works. A treatise which he published about 1650, and which attracted very wide notice, significantly illustrated his rather fatal facility for ready writing. The treatise was entitled "The Hope of

Israel," and sought to prove no less than that some aborigines in America, whose very existence was doubtful, were lineal descendants of the lost ten tribes. The Hope itself seems to have rested on no more solid foundation than a traveller's tale of savages met with in the wilds, who included something that sounded like the שמע (Shemang [1]) in their vernacular. The story was quickly translated into several languages, but it was almost as quickly disproved, and Manasseh's deductions from it were subsequently rather roughly criticised. Truth to say, the accumulated stores of his mind were ground down and sifted and sown broadcast in somewhat careless and indigestible masses, and their general character gives an uncomfortable impression of machine-work rather than of hand-work. And the proportion of what he wrote was as nothing compared to

[1] Short declaration of belief in Unity (Deut. vi. 4).

what he contemplated writing. Perhaps those never-written books of his would have proved the most readable ; he might have shown us himself, his wise, tolerant, enthusiastic self, in them. But instead, we possess, in his shelves on shelves of published compilations of dead men's minds, only duly labelled and catalogued selections from learned mummies.

The dream of Manasseh was to compose a "Heroic History," a significant title which shadows forth the worthy record he would have delighted in compiling from Jewish annals. It is as well, perhaps, that the title is all we have of the work, for he was too good an idealist to prove a good historian. He cared too much and he knew too much, to write a reliable or a readable history of his people. To him, as to many of us, Robert Browning's words might be applied—

"So you saw yourself as you wished you were—
As you might have been, as you cannot be—
Earth here rebuked by Olympus there,
And grew content in your poor degree." [1]

He, at any rate, had good reason to grow content in his degree, for he was destined to make an epoch in the "Heroic History," instead of being, as he wished he were, the reciter, and probably the prosy reciter, of several. Certain it is that great scholar, successful preacher, and voluminous writer as was Manasseh ben Israel, it was not till he was fifty years old that he found his real vocation. He had felt at it for years, his books were more or less blind gropings after it, his friendships with the eminent and highly-placed personages of his time were all unconscious means to a conscious end, and his very character was a factor in his gradually formed purpose. His whole life had been an

[1] "Old Pictures from Florence."

upholding of the "standard;" publicists who sneered at the ostentatious rich Jew, priests who railed at the degraded poor Jew, were each bound to recognize in Manasseh ben Israel a Jew of another type: one poor yet self-respecting, sought after yet unostentatious, conservative yet cosmopolitan, learned yet undogmatic. They might question if this Amsterdam Rabbi were *sui generis*, but they were at least willing to find out if he were in essentials what he claimed to be, fairly representative of the fairly treated members of his race. So the "way was prepared" by the "standard" being raised. Which, of the many long-closed "gates," was to open for the people to pass through?

Manasseh looked around on Europe. He sought a safe and secure resting-place for the tribe of wandering foot and weary heart, where, no longer weary and wandering, they might cease to be "tribal,"

He sought a place where "protection" should not be given as a sordid bribe, nor conferred as a fickle favour, but claimed as an inalienable right, and shared in common with all law-abiding citizens. His thoughts turned for a while on Sweden, and there was some correspondence to that end with the young Queen Christina, but this failing, or falling through, his hopes were almost at once definitely directed towards England. It was a wise selection and a happy one, and the course of events, and the time and the temper of the people seemed all upon his side. The faithless Stuart king had but lately expiated his hateful, harmful weakness on the scaffold, and sentiment was far as yet from setting the nimbus of saint and martyr on that handsome, treacherous head. The echoes of John Hampden's brave voice seemed still vibrating in the air, and Englishmen, but freshly reminded of their rights,

were growing keen and eager in the scenting out of wrongs; quick to discover, and fierce to redress evils which had long lain rooted and rotting, and unheeded. The pompous *insouciance* of the first Stuart king, the frivolous *insouciance* of the second, were now being resented in inevitable reaction. The court no longer led the fashion, the people had come to the front and were grown grimly, even grotesquely in earnest. The very fashion of speaking seems to have changed with the new need for strong, terse expression. Men greeted each other with old-fashioned Bible greetings; they named their children after those "great ones gone," or with even quainter effect in some simple selected Bible phrase; the very tones of the Prophets seemed to resound in Whitehall, and Englishmen to have become, in a wide unsensational sense, not men only of the sword, or of the plough, but

men of the Book, and that Book the Bible. Liberty of conscience, equality before the law for all religious denominations, had been the unconditional demand of that wonderful army of Independents, and although the Catholics were the immediate cause and object of this appeal, yet Manasseh, watching events from the calm standpoint of a keenly interested onlooker, thought he discerned in the listening attitude of the English Parliament, a favourable omen of the attention he desired to claim for his clients, since it was not alone for political, but for religious rights that he meant to plead.

He did not, however, actually come to England till 1655, when the way for personal intercession had been already prepared by correspondence and petition. His "Hope of Israel" had been forwarded to Cromwell so early as 1650; petitions praying for the readmission of

Jews to England with full rights of worship, of burial, and of commerce secured to them, had been laid before the Long and the Rump Parliament, and Manasseh had now in hand, and approaching completion, a less elaborate and more impassioned composition than usual, entitled, "Vindicæ Judæorum." A powerful and unexpected advocate of Jewish claims presently came forward in the person of Edward Nicholas, the clerk to the Council. This large-minded and enlightened gentleman had the courage to publish an elaborate appeal for, and defence of, the Jews, "the most honourable people in the world," as he styled them, "a people chosen by God and protected by God." The pamphlet was headed, "Apology for the Honourable Nation of the Jews and all the Sons of Israel," and Nicholas' arguments aroused no small amount of attention and discussion. It was even whispered

that Cromwell had had a share in the authorship; but if this had been so, undoubtedly he who "stood bare, not cased in euphemistic coat of mail," but who "grappled like a giant, face to face, heart to heart, with the naked truth of things," [1] would have unhesitatingly avowed it. His was not the sort of nature to shirk responsibilities nor to lack the courage of his opinions. There can be no doubt that, from first to last, Cromwell was strongly in favour of Jewish claims being allowed, but just as little doubt is there that there was never any tinge or taint of "secret favouring" about his sayings or his doings on the subject. The part, and all things considered the very unpopular part, he took in the subsequent debates, had, of course, to be accounted for by minds not quick to understand such simple motive power

[1] "On Heroes," Lect. vi. "The hero as king," p. 342.

as justice, generosity, or sympathy, and both now and later the wildest accusations were levelled against the Protector. That he was, unsuspected, himself of Jewish descent, and had designs on the long vacant Messiahship of his interesting kinsfolk, was not the most malignant, though it was perhaps among the most absurd of these tales. "The man is without a soul," writes Carlyle, "that can look into the great soul of a man, radiant with the splendours of very heaven, and see nothing there but the shadow of his own mean darkness." [1] There must have been, if this view be correct, a good many particularly materialistic bodies going about at that epoch in English history when the Protector of England took upon himself the unpopular burden of being also the Protector of the Jews.

There had been some opposition on

[1] "Cromwell," vol. ii. p. 359.

the part of his family to overcome, some tender timid forbodings, which events subsequently justified, to dispel, before Manasseh was free to set out for England, but in the late autumn of 1655 [1] we find him with two or three companions safely settled in lodgings in the Strand. An address to the Protector was personally presented by Manasseh, whilst a more detailed declaration to the Commonwealth was simultaneously published. Very remarkable are both these documents. Neither in the personal petition to Cromwell, nor in the more elaborate argument addressed to the Parliament, is there the slightest approach to the *ad misericordiam* style. The whole case for the Jews is stated with dignity, and pleaded without passion, and throughout justice rather than favour forms the staple of the demand. The "clemency" and "high-mindedness" of Cromwell are

[1] Some chroniclers fix it so early as 1653.

certainly taken for granted, but equally is assumed the worthiness of the clients who appeal to these qualities. Manasseh makes also a strong point of the "Profit," which the Jews are likely to prove to their hosts, naïvely recognizing the fact that "Profit is a most powerful motive which all the world prefers above all other things;" and "therefore dealing with that point first." He dwells on the "ability," and "industry," and "natural instinct" of the Jews for "merchandizing," and for "contributing new inventions," which extra aptitude, in a somewhat optimistic spirit, he moralizes, may have been given to them for their "protection in their wanderings," since "wheresoever they go to dwell, there presently the traficq begins to flourish."

Read in the light of some recent literature, one or two of Manasseh's arguments might almost be termed prophetic. Far-sighted, however, and wide-

seeing as was our Amsterdam Rabbi, he could certainly not have foretold that more than two hundred years later his race would be taunted in the same breath for being a "wandering" and "homeless tribe," and for remaining a "settled" and "parasitic" people in their adopted countries; yet are not such ingenious, and ungenerous, and inconsistent taunts answered by anticipation in the following paragraph?—

"The love that men ordinarily bear to their own country, and the desire they have to end their lives where they had their beginning, is the cause that most strangers, having gotten riches where they are in a foreign land, are commonly taken in a desire to return to their native soil, and there peaceably to enjoy their estate; so that as they were a help to the places where they lived and negotiated while they remained

there, so when they depart from thence, they carry all away and spoile them of their wealth ; transporting all into their own native country : but with the Jews, the case is farre different, for where the Jews are once kindly receaved, they make a firm resolution never to depart from thence, seeing they have no proper place of their own ; and so they are always with their goods in the cities where they live, a perpetual benefitt to all payments." [1]

Manassseh goes on to quote Holy Writ, to show that to "seek for the peace," and to "pray for the peace of the city whither ye are led captive," [2] was from remote times a loyal duty enjoined on Jews ; and so he makes perhaps another point against that

[1] From "Declaration to the Commonwealth of England."

[2] Jeremiah, ch. xxix. 7.

thorough-going historian of our day, who would have disposed of the People and the Book, the Jews and the Old Testament together, in the course of a magazine article. To prove that uncompromising loyalty has among Jews the added force of a religious obligation, Manasseh mentions the fact that the ruling dynasty is always prayed for by upstanding congregations in every Jewish place of worship, and he makes history give its evidence to show that this is no mere lip loyalty, but that the obligation enjoined has been over and over again faithfully fulfilled. He quotes numerous instances in proof of this; beginning from the time, 900 years B.C., when the Jerusalem Jews, High Priest at their head, went forth to defy Alexander, and to own staunch allegiance to discrowned Darius, till those recent civil wars in Spain, when the Jews of Burgos manfully held that city against the conqueror,

Henry of Transtamare, in defence of their conquered, but liege lord, Pedro.[1]

Of all the simply silly slanders from which his people had suffered, such, for instance, as the kneading Passover biscuits with the blood of Christian children, Manasseh disposes shortly, with brief and distinct denial; pertinently reminding Englishmen, however, that like absurd accusations crop up in the early history of the Church, when the "very same ancient scandalls was cast of old upon the innocent Christians."

With the more serious, because less absolutely untruthful charge of "usury," Manasseh deals as boldly, urging even no extenuating plea, but frankly admitting the practice to be "infamous." But characteristically, he proceeds to express an opinion, that "inasmuch as no man is bound to give his goods to another, so is he not bound to let it out but for his

[1] In 1369.

own occasions and profit," "only," and this he adds emphatically—

"It must be done with moderation, that the usury be not biting or exorbitant. . . . The sacred Scripture, which allows usury with him that is not of the same religion, forbids absolutely the robbing of all men, whatsoever religion they be of. In our law it is a greater sinne to rob or defraud a stranger, than if I did it to one of my owne profession; a Jew is bound to shew his charity to all men; he hath a precept, not to abhorre an Idumean or an Egyptian; and yet another, that he shall love and protect a stranger that comes to live in his land. If notwithstanding, there be some that do contrary to this, they do it not as Jewes simply but as wicked Jewes."

The Appeal made, as it could scarcely fail to do, a profound impression; an

impression which was helped not a little by the presence and character of the pleader. And presently the whole question of the return of the Jews to England was submitted to the nation for its decision.

The clergy were dead against the measure, and, it is said, "raged like fanatics against the Jews as an accursed nation." And then it was that Cromwell, true to his highest convictions, stood up to speak in their defence. On the ground of policy, he temperately urged the desirability of adding thrifty, law-respecting, and enterprizing citizens to the national stock; and on the higher ground of duty, he passionately pleaded the unpopular cause of religious and social toleration. He deprecated the principle that, the claims of morality being satisfied, any men or any body of men, on the score of race, of origin, or of religion ("tribal mark" had not at that date been

suggested), should be excluded from full fellowship with other men. "I have never heard a man speak so splendidly in my life," is the recorded opinion of one of the audience, and it is a matter of intense regret that this famous speech of Cromwell's has not been preserved. Its eloquence, however, failed of effect, so far as its whole and immediate object was concerned. The gates were no more than shaken on their rusting hinges—not quite yet were the people free to "go through."

The decision of the Council of State was deferred, and some authorities even allege that it was presently pronounced against the readmission of the Jews to England. The known and avowed favour of the Protector sufficed, nevertheless, to induce the few Jews who had come with, or in the train of, Manasseh to remain, and others gradually, and by degrees, and without any especial notice

being taken of them, ventured to follow. The creaking old gates were certainly ajar, and wider and wider they opened, and fainter and fainter, from friction of unrestrained intercourse, grew each dull rust and stain of prejudice till that good day, within living memories, when the barriers were definitely and altogether flung down. And on their ruins a new and healthy human growth sprang quickly up, "taking root downwards, and bearing fruit upwards," spreading wide enough in its vigorous luxuriance to cover up all the old bad past. And by this time it has happily grown impervious to any wanton unfriendly touch which would thrust its kindly shade aside and once again lay those ugly ruins bare.

Manasseh, however, like so many of us, had to be content to sow seed which he was destined never to see ripen. His petitions to the Commonwealth were presented in 1655, his "Vindiciæ Judæo-

rum" was completed and handed in some time in 1656, and in the early winter of 1657, on his journey homewards, he died. His mission had not fulfilled itself in the complete triumphant way he had hoped, but "life fulfils itself in many ways," and one part at any rate, perhaps the most important part of the Hebrew prophet's charge, had been both poetically and prosaically carried out by this seventeenth-century Dutch Jew. He had "lifted up a standard for his people."

CHARITY IN TALMUDIC TIMES.[1]

SOME ANCIENT SOLVINGS OF A MODERN PROBLEM.

"WHAT have we reaped from all the wisdom sown of ages?" asks Lord Lytton in one of his earlier poems. A large query, even for so questioning an age as this, an age which, discarding catechisms, and rejecting the omniscient Magnall's Questions as a classic for its children, yet seems to be more interrogative than of old, even if a thought less ready in its responses. Possibly, we are all in too great a hurry now-a-days, too eager in search to be patient to find, for certain it is that the world's

[1] Reprinted from *National Review*.

already large stock of hows and whys seems to get bigger every day. We catch the echoes in poetry and in prose, in all sorts of tones and from all sorts of people, and Lord Lytton's question sounds only like another of the hopeless Pilate series. His is such a large interrogation too—all the wisdom sown of all the ages suggests such an enormous crop! And then as to what "we," who have neither planted nor watered, have "reaped" from it! An answer, if it were attempted, might certainly be found to hinge on the "we" as well as on the "wisdom," for whereas untaught instinct may "reap" honey from a rose, trained reason in gathering the flower may only succeed in running a thorn into the finger. What has been the general effect of inherited wisdom on the general world may, however, very well be left for a possible solution to prize competitors to puzzle over. But

to a tiny corner of the tremendous subject it is just possible that we may find some sort of suggestive reply; and from seed sown ages since, and garnered as harvest, by men whose place knows them no more, we may likely light on some shadowy aftermath worth, perhaps, our reaping.

The gospel of duty to one's neighbour, which, long languishing as a creed, seems now reviving as a fashion, has always been, amongst that race which taught "love thy neighbour as thyself," not only of the very essence of religion, but an ordinary social form of it. It is "law" in the "family chronicle" of the race, as Heine calls the Bible; it is "law" and legend both in those curious national archives known as Talmud. Foremost in the ranks of *livres incompris* stand those portentous volumes, the one work of the world which has suffered about equally at the hands of the com-

mentator and the executioner. Many years ago Emmanuel Deutsch gave to the uninitiated a glimpse into that wondrous agglomeration of fantastically followed facts, where long-winded legend, or close-argued "law," starts some phrase or word from Holy Writ as quarry, and pursues it by paths the most devious, the most digressive imaginable to man. The work of many generations and of many "masters" in each generation, such a book is singularly susceptible to an open style of reading and a liberal aptitude of quotation, and it is no marvel that searchers in its pages, even reasonably honest ones, should be able to find detached individual utterances to fit into almost any one of their own preconceived dogmas concerning Talmud. On many subjects, qualifications, contradictions, differences abound, and instances of illegal law, of pseudo-science, of doubtful physics, may each, with a little

trouble, be disinterred from the depths of these twelve huge volumes. But the ethics of the Talmud are, as a whole, of a high order, and on one point there is such remarkable and entire agreement, that it is here permissible to speak of what "the Talmud says," meaning thereby a general tone and consensus of opinion, and not the views of this or of that individual master. The subject on which this unusual harmony prevails is the, in these days, much discussed one of charity; and to discover something concerning so very ancient a mode of dealing with it may not prove uninteresting.

The word which in these venerable folios is made to express the thing is, in itself, significant. In the Hebrew Scriptures, though the injunctions to charitable acts are many, an exact equivalent for our word "charity" can hardly be said to exist. In only eight

instances, and not even then in its modern sense, does the Septuagint translate צדקה (*tzedakah*) into its Greek equivalent, ἐλεημοσύνη, which would become in English "alms," or "charity." The nearest synonyms for "charity" in the Hebrew Scriptures are צדקה (*tzedakah*), well translated as "righteousness" in the Authorized Version, and חסד (*chesed*), which is adequately rendered as "mercy, kindness, love." The Talmud, in its exhaustive fashion, seems to accentuate the essential difference between these two words. *Tzedakah* is, to some extent, a class distinction; the rights of the poor make occasion for the righteousness of the rich, and the duties of *tzedakah* find liberal and elaborate expression in a strict and minute system of tithes and almsgiving.[1] The injunctions of the Pentateuch con-

[1] Maimonides, in his well-known digest of Talmudic laws relating to the poor, uniformly employs *tzedakah* in the sense of "alms."

cerning the poor are worked out by the Talmud into the fullest detail of direction. The Levitical law, "When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field" (Levit. xiv. 9), gives occasion of itself to a considerable quantity of literature. At length it is enacted how, if brothers divide a field between them, each has to give a "corner," and how, if a man sell his field in several lots, each purchaser of each separate lot has to leave unreaped his own proportionate "corner" of the harvesting. And not only to leave unreaped, but how, in cases where the "corner" was of a sort hard for the poor to gather, hanging high, as dates, or needing light handling, as grapes, it became the duty of the owner to undertake the "reaping" thereof, and, himself, to make the rightful division; thus guarding against injury to quickly-perishable fruits from too eager hands,

or danger of a more serious sort to life or limbs, where ladders had to be used by hungry and impatient folks. The exactest rules, too, are formulated as to what constitutes a "field" and what a "corner," as to what produce is liable to the tax and in what measure. Very curious it is to read long and gravely-reasoned arguments as to why mushrooms should be held exempt from the law of the corner, whilst onions must be subject to it, or the weighty *pros* and *cons* over what may be fairly considered a "fallen grape," or a "sheaf left through forgetfulness." Yet the principle underlying the whole is too clear for prolixity to raise a smile, and the evident anxiety that no smallest loop-hole shall be left for evading the obligations of property compels respect.

Little room for doubt on any disputed point of partition do these exhaustive, and, occasionally, it must be

owned, exhausting, masters leave us, yet, when all is said, they are careful to add, "Whatever is doubtful concerning the gifts of the poor belongeth to the poor." The actual money value of this system of alms, the actual weight of ancient ephah or omer, in modern lbs. and ozs. would convey little meaning. Values fluctuate and measures vary, but "a tithe of thy increase," "a corner of thy field," gives a tolerably safe index to the scale on which *tzedakah* was to be practised. Three times a day the poor might glean, and to the question which some lover of system, old style or new, might propound, "Why three times? Why not once, and get it over?" an answer is vouchsafed. "*Because there may be poor who are suckling children, and thus stand in need of food in the early morning; there may be young children who cannot be got ready early in the morning, nor come to the field till it*

be mid-day; there may be aged folk who cannot come till the time of evening prayer." Still, though plenty of sentiment in this code, there is no trace of sentimentality; rather a tendency for each back to bear its own burden, whether it be in the matter of give or take. Rights are respected all round, and significant in this sense is the rule that if a vineyard be sold by Gentile to Jew it must give up its "small bunches" of grapes to the poor; while if the transaction be the other way, the Gentile purchaser is altogether exempt, and if Jew and Gentile be partners, that part of the crop belonging to the Jew alone is taxed. And equally clear is it that the poor, though cared for and protected, are not to be petted. At this very three-times-a-day gleaning, if one should keep a corner of his "corner" to himself, hiding his harvesting and defrauding his neighbour, justice is prompt: "*Let him*

be forced to depart," it is written, "*and what he may have received let it be taken out of his hands.*" Neither is any preference permitted to poverty of the plausible or of the picturesque sort. "*He who refuseth to one and giveth to another, that man is a defrauder of the poor*," it is gravely said.

In general charity, there are, it is true, certain rules of precedence to be observed ; kindred, for example, have, in all cases, the first claim, and a child supporting his parents, or even a parent supporting adult children, to the end that these may be "versed in the law, and have good manners," is set high among followers of *tzedakah*. Then, "*The poor who are neighbours are to be regarded before all others ; the poor of one's own family before the poor of one's own city, and the poor of one's own city before the poor of another's city.*" And this version of "charity begins at home" is worked

out in another place into quite a detailed table, so to speak, of professional precedence in the ranks of recognized recipients. And, curiously enough, first among all the distinctions to be observed comes this: "*If a man and woman solicit relief, the woman shall be first attended to and then the man.*" An explanation, perhaps a justification, of this mild forestalment of women's rights, is given in the further dictum that "Man is accustomed to wander, and that woman is not," and "Her feelings of modesty being more acute," it is fit that she should be "always fed and clothed before the man." And if, in this ancient system, there be a recognized scale of rights for receiving, so, equally, is there a graduated order of merit in giving. Eight in number are these so-called "Degrees in Alms Deeds," the curious list gravely setting forth as "highest," and this, it would seem, rather on the

lines of "considering the poor" than of mere giving, that *tzedakah* which "helpeth . . . who is cast down," by means of gift or loan, or timely procuring of employment, and ranging through "next" and "next," till it announces, as eighth and least, the "any one who giveth after much molestation." High in the list, too, are placed those "silent givers" who "let not poor children of upright parents know from whom they receive support," and even the man who "giveth less than his means allow" is lifted one degree above the lowest if he "give with a kind countenance."

The mode of relief grew, with circumstances, to change. The time came when, to "the Hagars and Ishmaels of mankind," rules for gleaning and for "fallen grapes" would, perforce, be meaningless, and new means for the carrying out of *tzedakah* had to be devised. In Alms of the Chest, קופה

(*kupah*), and Alms of the Basket, תמחוי (*tamchui*), another exhaustive system of relief was formulated. The *kupah* would seem to have been a poor-rate, levied on all "residents in towns of over thirty days' standing," and "Never," says Maimonides, "have we seen or heard of any congregation of Israelites in which there has not been the Chest for Alms, though, with regard to the Basket, it is the custom in some places to have it, and not in others." These chests were placed in the Silent Court of the Sanctuary, to the end that a class of givers who went by the name of Fearers of Sin,[1] might deposit their alms in silence and be relieved of responsibility. The contents of the Chest were collected weekly and used

[1] יראי חטא (*yeree chet*). These ultra-sensitive folks seem to have feared that in direct relief they might be imposed on and so indirectly become encouragers of wrong-doing, or unnecessarily hurt the feelings of the poor by too rigid enquiries.

for all ordinary objects of relief, the overplus being devoted to special cases and special purposes. It is somewhat strange to our modern notions to find that one among such purposes was that of providing poor folks with the wherewith to marry. For not only is it commanded concerning the "brother waxen poor," "*If he standeth in need of garments, let him be clothed; or if of household things, let him be supplied with them,*" but "*if of a wife, let a wife be betrothed unto him, and in case of a woman, let a husband be betrothed unto her.*" Does this quaint provision recall Voltaire's taunt that "Les juifs ont toujours regardé comme leurs deux grands devoirs des enfants et de l'argent"? Perhaps, and yet, Voltaire and even Malthus notwithstanding, it is just possible that the last word has not been said on this subject, and that in "improvident" marriages and large families the new creed of sur-

vival of the fittest may, after all, be best fulfilled.

Philosophers, we know, are not always consistent with themselves, and if there be truth in another saying of Voltaire's —"Voyez les registres affreux de vos greffes crimines, vous y trouvez cent garçons de pendus ou de roués contre un père de famille"—then is there something certainly to be said in favour of the Jewish system. But this by the way, since statistics, it must be owned, are the most sensitive and susceptible of the sciences. This ancient betrothing, moreover, was no empty form, no bare affiancing of two paupers; but a serious and substantial practice of raising a marriage portion for a couple unable to marry without it. By Talmudic code, "marriages were not legitimately complete till a settlement of some sort was made on the wife," who, it may be here parenthetically remarked, was so far in

advance of comparatively modern legislation as to be entitled to have and to hold in as complete and comprehensive a sense as her husband.

But whilst Alms of the Chest, though pretty various in its application,[1] was intended only for the poor of the place in which it was collected, Alms of the Basket was, to the extent of its capabilities, for "the poor of the whole world." It consisted of a daily house-to-house collection of food of all sorts, and occasionally of money, which was again, day by day, distributed. This custom of *tamchui*, suited to

[1] We read, in mediæval times, of the existence of wide "extensions" of this system of relief. In a curious old book, published in the seventeenth century, by a certain Rabbi Elijah ha Cohen ben Abraham, of Smyrna, we find a list drawn up of Jewish charities to which, as he says, "all pious Jews contribute." These modes of satisfying "the hungry soul" are over seventy in number, and of the most various kinds. They include the lending of money and the lending of books, the payment of dowries and the payment of burial charges, doctors' fees for the sick, legal fees for the unjustly accused, ransom for captives, ornaments for brides, and wet nurses for orphans.

those primitive times, would seem to be very similar to the practice of "common Boxes, and common gatherynges in every City," which prevailed in England in the sixteenth century, and which received legal sanction in Act of the 23rd of Henry VIII.—"Item, that 2 or 3 tymes in every weke 2 or 3 of every parysh shal appoynt certaine of ye said pore people to collecte and gather broken meates and fragments, and the refuse drynke of every householder, which shal be distributed evenly amonge the pore people as they by theyre discrecyons shal thynke good." Only the collectors and distributors of *kupah* and *tamchui* were not "certaine of ye said pore people;" but unpaid men of high character, holding something of the position of magistrates in the community. The duty of contributing in kind to *tamchui* was supplemented among the richer folks by a habit of entertaining

the poor as guests ;[1] seats at their own tables, and beds in their houses being frequently reserved for wayfarers, at least over Sabbath and festivals.[2]

The curious union of sense and sentiment in the Talmudic code is shown again in the regulations as to who may, and who may not, receive of these gifts of the poor: "*He who has sufficient for two meals*," so runs the law, "*may not take from tamchui ; he who has sufficient for fourteen may not take from kupah.*" Yet might holders of property, fallen on slack seasons, be saved from selling at a loss and helped to hold on till better times, by being

[1] Spanish Jews often had their coffins made from the wood of the tables at which they had sat with their unfashionable guests.

[2] This custom had survived into quite modern times —to cite only the well-known case of Mendelssohn, who, coming as a penniless student to Berlin, received his Sabbath meals in the house of one co-religionist, and the privilege of an attic chamber under the roof of another.

"meanwhile supported out of the tithes of the poor." And if the house and goods of him in this temporary need were grand, money help might be given to the applicant, and he might keep all his smart personal belongings, yet superfluities, an odd item or two of which are vouchsafed, must be sold, and replaced, if at all, by a simpler sort. Still, with all this excessive care for those who have come down in the world, and despite the dictum that "he who withholdeth alms is 'impious,' and like unto an idolater," there is yet no encouragement to dependence discernible in these precise and prolix rules. "Let thy Sabbath be as an ordinary day, rather than become dependent on thy fellow-men," it is clearly written, and told, too, in detail, how "wise men," the most honoured, by the way, in the community, to avoid "dependence on others," might become, without loss of caste or re-

spectability, "carriers of timber, workers in metal, and makers of charcoal." Neither is there any contempt for wealth or any love of poverty for its own sake to be seen in this people, who were taught to "rejoice before the Lord." In one place it is, in truth, gravely set forth that "he who increaseth the number of his servants" increaseth the amount of sin in the world, but this somewhat ascetic-sounding statement is clearly susceptible of a good deal of common sense interpretation, and when another Master tells us that "charity is the salt which keeps wealth from corruption," a thought, perhaps, for the due preservation of the wealth may be read between the lines.

On the whole, it looks as if these old-world Rabbis set to work at laying down the law in much the spirit of Robert Browning's Rabbi—

> "Let us not alway say,
> Spite of this flesh to-day,
> I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole.

As the bird wings and sings
Let us cry "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps soul."

After this manner, at any rate, are set forth, and in this sense are interpeted in the Talmud, the Biblical injunctions to *tzedakah*, to that charity of alms-deeds which, as society is constituted, must, as we said, be considered somewhat of a class distinction.

But for the charity which should be obligatory all round, and as easy of fulfilment by the poor as by the rich, the Talmud chooses the other synonym חסד (*chesed*), and coining from it the word *Gemiluth-chesed*, which may be rendered "the doing of kindness," it works out a supplementary and social system of charity — a system founded not on "rights," but on sympathy—dealing not in doles, but in deeds of friendship and of fellowship, and demanding a giving of oneself rather than of one's stores. And

greater than *tzedakah* write the Rabbis, is *Gemiluth-chesed*, justifying their dictum, as is their wont, by a reference to Holy Writ. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness (*tzedakah*)," says the prophet Hosea (Hos. x. 12); "reap in mercy (*chesed*);" and, inasmuch as reaping is better than sowing, mercy must be better than righteousness. To "visit the sick," to promote peace in families apt to fall out, to "relieve all persons, Jews or non-Jews, in affliction" (a comprehensive phrase), to "bury the dead," to "accompany the bride," are among those "kindnesses" which take rank as religious duties, and one or two specimens may indicate the amount of careful detail which make these injunctions practical, and the fine motive which goes far towards spiritualizing them.

Of the visiting of the sick, the Talmud speaks with a sort of awe. God's spirit, it says, dwells in the chamber of

suffering and death, and tendance therein is worship. Nursing was to be voluntary, and no charge to be made for drugs; and so deeply did the habit of helping the helpless in this true missionary spirit obtain among the Jews, that to this day, and more especially in provincial places, the last offices for the dead are rarely performed by hired hands. The "accompanying of the bride" is *Gemiluth-chesed* in another form. To rejoice with one's neighbour's joys is no less a duty in this un-Rochefoucauld-like code than to grieve with his grief. A bride is to be greeted with songs and flowers, and pleasant speeches, and, if poor, to be provided with pretty ornaments and substantial gifts, but the pleasant speeches are in all cases, and before all things, obligatory. In the discursive detail, which is so strong a feature of these Talmudic rulings, it is asked: "But if the bride be old, or awkward,

or positively plain, is she to be greeted in the usual formula as 'fair bride—graceful bride?'" "Yes," is the answer, for one is not bound to insist on uncomfortable facts, nor to be obtrusively truthful; to be agreeable is one of the minor virtues. Were there anything in the doctrine of metempsychosis, one would be almost tempted to believe that this ancient, un-named, Rabbi was speaking over again in the person of one of our modern minor poets:

> "A truth that's told with bad intent
> Beats all the lies you can invent."[1]

The charity of courtesy is everywhere insisted upon, and so strongly, that, on behalf of those sometimes ragged and unkempt Rabbis it might perhaps be urged that politeness, the *politesse du cœur*, was their Judaism *en papillote*. "Receive every one with pleasant looks,"

[1] William Blake.

says one sage,[1] whose practice was, perhaps, not always quite up to his precepts; "where there is no reverence there is no wisdom," says another; and as the distinguishing mark of a "clown," a third instances that man—have we not all met him?—who rudely breaks in on another's speech, and is more glib than accurate or respectful in his own.

And as postscript to the "law" obtaining on these cheery social forms of "charity" a tombstone may perhaps be permitted to add its curious, crumbling bit of evidence. In the House of Life, as Jews name their burial-grounds, at Prague, there stood—perhaps stands still—a stone, erected to the memory, and recording the virtues, of a certain rich lady who died in 1628. Her benefactions, many and minute, are set forth at length, and amongst the rest, and before "she clothed the naked," comes the item,

[1] Shimei.

"she ran like a bird to weddings." Through the mists of those terrible stories, which make of Prague so miserable a memory to Jews, the record of this long-ago dead woman gleams like a rainbow. One seems to see the bright little figure, a trifle out of breath may be, the gay plumage perhaps just a shade ruffled—somehow one does not fancy her a very prim or tidy personage —running "like a bird to weddings." She seems, the dear sympathetic soul, in an old suggestive sort of way, to illustrate the charitable system of her race, and to show us that, despite all differences of time and place and circumstances, the one essential condition to any "charity" that shall prove effectual remains unchanged; that the solution of the hard problem, which may be worked out in a hundred ways, is just sympathy, and is to be learnt, not in the "speaking from afar" of rich to poor, but in the "laying

of hands" upon them. The close fellowship of this ancient primitive system is perhaps impossible in our more complex civilization, but an approximation to it is an ideal worth striving after. More intimate, more everyday communion between West and East, more "Valentines" at Hoxton, are sorely needed. Concert-giving, class-teaching, "visiting," are all helps of a sort, but there are so many days in a poor man's week, so many hours in his dull day. Sweetness and light, like other and more prosaic products of civilization, need, it may be, to be "laid on" in those miles of monotonous streets, long breaks in continuity being fatal to results.

MOSES MENDELSSOHN.

"I WISH, it is true, to shame the opprobrious sentiments commonly entertained of a Jew, but it is by character and not by controversy that I would do it."[1] So wrote the subject of this memoir more than a hundred years ago, and the sentence may well stand for the motto of his life; for much as Moses Mendelssohn achieved by his ability, much more did he by his conduct, and great as he was as a philosopher, far greater was he as a man. Starting with every possible disadvantage—prejudice, poverty, and deformity—he yet reached the goal of "honour, fame, and troops of friends" by simple force of character; and thus

[1] In the correspondence with Lavater.

he remains for all time an illustration of the happy optimistic theory that, even in this world, success, in the best sense of the word, does come to those, who, also in the best sense of the word, deserve it.

The state of the Jews in Germany at the time of Mendelssohn's birth was deplorable. No longer actively hunted, they had arrived, at the early part of the eighteenth century, at the comparatively desirable position of being passively shunned or contemptuously ignored, and, under these new conditions, they were narrowing fast to the narrow limits set them. The love of religion and of race was as strong as ever, but the love had grown sullen, and of that jealous, exclusive sort to which curse and anathema are akin. What then loomed largest on their narrow horizon was fear; and under that paralyzing influence, progress or prominence of any kind became a dis-

tinct evil, to be repressed at almost any personal sacrifice. Safety for themselves and tolerance for their faith, lay, if anywhere, in the neglect of the outside world. And so the poor pariahs huddled in their close quarters, carrying on mean trades, or hawking petty wares, and speaking, with bated breath, a dialect of their own, half Jewish, half German, and as wholly degenerate from the old grand Hebrew as were they themselves from those to whom it had been a living tongue. Intellectual occupation was found in the study of the Law; interest and entertainment in the endless discussion of its more intricate passages; and excitement in the not infrequent excommunication of the weaker or bolder brethren who ventured to differ from the orthodox expounders. The culture of the Christian they hated, with a hate born half of fear for its possible effects, half of repulsion at its palpable evidences.

The tree of knowledge seemed to them indeed, in pathetic perversion of the early legend, a veritable tree of evil which should lose a second Eden to the wilful eaters thereof. Their Eden was degenerate, too; but the "voice heard in the evening" still sounded in their dulled and passionate ears, and, vibrating in the Ghetto instead of the grove, it seemed to bid them shun the forbidden fruit of Gentile growth.

In September, 1729, under a very humble roof, in a very poor little street in Dessau, was born the weakly boy who was destined to work such wonderful changes in that weary state of things. Not much fit to hold the magician's wand seemed those frail baby hands, and less and less likely altogether for the part, as the poor little body grew stunted and deformed through the stress of over-much study and of something less than enough of whole-

some diet. There was no lack of affection in the mean little Jewish home, but the parents could only give their children of what they had, and of these scant possessions, mother-love and Talmudical lore were the staple. And so we read of the small five-year-old Moses being wrapped up by his mother in a large old shabby cloak, on early, bleak, winter mornings, and then so carried by the father to the neighbouring "Talmud Torah" school, where he was nourished with dry Hebrew roots by way of breakfast. Often, indeed, was the child fed on an even less satisfying diet, for long passages from Scripture, long lists of precepts, to be learnt by heart, on all sorts of subjects, was the approved method of instruction in these seminaries. An extensive, if somewhat parrot-like, acquaintance at an astonishingly early age with the Law and the Prophets, and the commentators on both, was the

ordinary result of this form of education; and, naturally co-existent with it, was an equally astonishing and extensive ignorance of all more every-day subjects. Contentedly enough, however, the learned, illiterate peddling and hawking fathers left their little lads to this puzzling, sharpening, deadening sort of schooling. Frau Mendel and her husband may possibly have thought out the matter a little more fully, for she seems to have been a wise and prudent, as well as a loving mother, and the father, we find, was quick to discern unusual talent in the sickly little son whom he carried so carefully to the daily lesson. He was himself a teacher, in a humble sort of way, and eked out his small fees by transcribing on parchment from the Pentateuch. Thus, the tone of the little household, if not refined, was at least not altogether sordid; and when, presently, the little Moses was promoted from the

ordinary school to the higher class taught by the great scholar, Rabbi Frankel, the question even presented itself whether it might not be well, in this especial case, to abandon the patent, practical advantages pertaining to the favoured pursuit of peddling, and to let the boy give himself up to his beloved books, and, following in his master's footsteps, become perhaps, in his turn, a poorly paid, much reverenced Rabbi.

It was a serious matter to decide. There was much to be said in favour of the higher path ; but the market for Rabbis, as for hawkers, was somewhat overstocked, and the returns in the one instance were far quicker and surer, and needed no long unearning apprenticeship. The balance, on the whole, seemed scarcely to incline to the more dignified profession ; but the boy was so terribly in earnest in his desire to learn, so desperately averse from the only other

career, that his wishes, by degrees, turned the scale; and it did not take very long to convince the poor patient father that he must toil a little longer and a little later, in order that his son might be free from the hated necessity of hawking, and at liberty to pursue his unremunerative studies.

From the very first, Moses made the most of his opportunities; and at home and at school high hopes began soon to be formed of the diligent, sweet-tempered, frail little lad. Frailer than ever, though, he seemed to grow, and the body appeared literally to dwindle as the mind expanded. Long years after, when the burden of increasing deformity had come, by dint of use and wont and cheerful courage, to be to him a burden lightly borne, he would set strangers at their ease by alluding to it himself, and by playfully declaring his hump to be a legacy from Maimonides.

"Maimonides spoilt my figure," he would say, "and ruined my digestion; but still," he would add more seriously, "I dote on him, for although those long vigils with him weakened my body, they, at the same time, strengthened my soul: they stunted my stature, but they developed my mind." Early at morning and late at night would the boy be found bending in happy abstraction over his shabby treasure, charmed into unconsciousness of aches or hunger. The book which had been lent to him was "Maimonides' Guide to the Perplexed"; and this work, which grown men find sufficiently deep study, was patiently puzzled out, and enthusiastically read and re-read by the persevering little student who was barely in his teens. It opened up whole vistas of new glories, which his long steady climb up Talmudic stairs had prepared him to appreciate. Here and there, in the course of those long,

tedious dissertations in the Talmud Torah class-room, the boy had caught glimpses of something underlying, something beyond the quibbles of the schools; but this, his first insight into the large and liberal mind of Maimonides, was a revelation to him of the powers and of the possibilities of Judaism. It revealed to him too, perchance, some latent possibilities in himself, and suggested other problems of life which asked solution. The pale cheeks glowed as he read, and the vague dreams kindled into conscious aims: he too would live to become a Guide to the Perplexed among his people!

Poor little lad! his brave resolves were soon to be put to a severe test. In the early part of 1742, Rabbi Frankel accepted the Chief Rabbinate of Berlin, and thus a summary stop was put to his pupil's further study. There is a pathetic story told of Moses Mendelssohn standing, with streaming eyes, on a little

hillock on the road by which his beloved master passed out of Dessau, and of the kind-hearted Frankel catching up the forlorn little figure, and soothing it with hopes of a "some day," when fortune should be kind, and he should follow "nach Berlin." The "some day" looked sadly problematical; that hard question of bread and butter came to the fore whenever it was discussed. How was the boy to live in Berlin? Even if the mind should be nourished for naught, who was to feed the body? The hard-working father and mother had found it no easy task hitherto to provide for that extra mouth; and now with Frankel gone, the occasion for their long self-denial seemed to them to cease. In the sad straits of the family, the business of a hawker began again to show in an attractive light to the poor parents; and the peddler's pack was once more suggested with many a prudent, loving,

half-hearted argument on its behalf. But the boy was by this time clear as to his vocation, so after a brief while of entreaty, the tearful permission was gained, the parting blessing given, and with a very slender wallet slung on his crooked shoulders, Moses Mendelssohn set out for Berlin.

It was a long tramp of over thirty miles, and, towards the close of the fifth day, it was a very footsore tired little lad who presented himself for admission at the Jews' gate of the city. Rabbi Frankel was touched, and puzzled too, when this penniless little student, whom he had inspired with such difficult devotion, at last stood before him ; but quickly he made up his mind that, so far as in him lay, the uphill path should be made smooth to those determined little feet. The pressing question of bed and board was solved. Frankel gave him his Sabbath and festival dinners, and

another kind-hearted Jew, Bamberger by name, who heard the boy's story, supplied two everyday meals, and let him sleep in an attic in his house. For the remaining four days? Well, he managed ; a groschen or two was often earned by little jobs of copying, and a loaf so purchased, by dint of economy and imagination, was made into quite a series of satisfying meals, and, in after days, it was told how he notched his loaves into accurate time measurements, lest appetite should outrun purse. Fortunately poverty was no new experience for him ; still, poverty confronted alone, in a great city, must have seemed something grimmer to the home-bred lad than that mother-interpreted poverty, which he had hitherto known. But he met it full-face, bravely, uncomplainingly, and, best of all, with unfailing good humour. And the little alleviations which friends made in his hard lot were

all received in a spirit of the sincerest, charmingest gratitude. He never took a kindness as "his due;" never thought, like so many embryo geniuses, that his talents gave him right of toll on his richer brethren. "Because I would drink at the well," he would say in his picturesque fashion, "am I to expect every one to haste and fill my cup from their pitchers? No, I must draw the water for myself, or I must go thirsty. I have no claim save my desire to learn, and what is that to others?" Thus he preserved his self-respect and his independence.

He worked hard, and, first of all, he wisely sought to free himself from all voluntary disabilities; there were enough and to spare of legally-imposed ones to keep him mindful of his Judaism. He felt strong enough in faith to need no artificial shackles. He would be Jew, and yet German—patriot, but no pariah.

He would eschew vague dreams of universalism, false ideas of tribalism. If Palestine had not been, he, its product, could not be; but Palestine and its glories were of the past and of the future; the present only was his, and he must shape his life according to its conditions, which placed him, in the eighteenth century, born of Jewish parents, in a German city. He was German by birth, Jew by descent and by conviction; he would fulfil all the obligations which country, race, and religion impose. But a German Jew, who did not speak the language of his country? That, surely, was an anomaly and must be set right. So he set himself strenuously to learn German, and to make it his native language. Such secular study was by no means an altogether safe proceeding. Ignorance, as we have seen, was "protected" in those days by Jewish ecclesiastical authority. Free trade in litera-

ture was sternly prohibited, and a German grammar, or a Latin or a Greek one, had, in sober truth, to run a strict blockade. One Jewish lad, it is recorded on very tolerable authority, was actually in the year 1746 expelled the city of Berlin for no other offence than that of being caught in the act of studying—one chronicle, indeed, says, carrying—some such proscribed volume. Moses, however, was more fortunate; he saved money enough to buy his books, or made friends enough to borrow them; and, we may conclude, found nooks in which to hide them, and hours in which to read them. He set himself, too, to gain some knowledge of the Classics, and here he found a willing teacher in one Kish, a medical student from Prague. Later on, another helper was gained in a certain Israel Moses, a Polish schoolmaster, afterwards known as Israel Samosc. This man was a

fine mathematician, and a first-rate Hebrew scholar; but as his attainments did not include the German language, he made Euclid known to Moses through the medium of a Hebrew translation. Moses, in return, imparted to Samosc his newly-acquired German, and learnt it, of course, more thoroughly through teaching it. He must have possessed the art of making friends who were able to take on themselves the office of teachers; for presently we find him, in odd half-hours, studying French and English under a Dr. Aaron Emrich.[1] He very early began to make translations of parts of the Scripture into German, and these attempts indicate that, from the first, his overpowering desire for self-culture sprang from no selfishness. He wanted to open up the closed roads to place and honour, but not to tread them

[1] Better known to scholars as Dr. Aaron Solomon Gompertz.

alone, not to leave his burdened brethren on the bye-paths, whilst he sped on rejoicing. He knew truly enough that "the light was sweet," and that "a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun." But he heeded too the other part of the charge, he "remembered the days of darkness, which were many." He remembered them always, heedfully, pitifully, patiently; and to the weary eyes which would not look up or could not, he ever strove to adjust the beautiful blessed light which he knew, and they, poor souls, doubted, was good. He never thrust it, unshaded, into their gloom: he never carried it off to illumine his own path.

Thus, the translations at which Moses Mendelssohn worked were no transcripts from learned treatises which might have found a ready market among the scholars of the day; but unpaid and unpaying work from the liturgy and the Scriptures, done

with the object that his people might by degrees share his knowledge of the vernacular, and become gradually and unconsciously familiar with the language of their country through the only medium in which there was any likelihood of their studying it. With that one set purpose always before him, of drawing his people with him into the light, he presently formed the idea of issuing a serial in Hebrew, which, under the title of "The Moral Preacher," should introduce short essays and transcripts on other than strictly Judaic or religious subjects. One Bock was his coadjutor in this project, and two numbers of the little work were published. The contents do not seem to have been very alarming. To our modern notions of periodical literature, they would probably be a trifle dull; but their mild philosophy and yet milder science proved more than enough to arouse the orthodox fears of

the poor souls, who, "bound in affliction and iron," distrusted even the gentle hand which was so eager to loose the fetters. There was a murmur of doubt, of muttered dislike of "strange customs;" perhaps here and there, too, a threat concerning the pains and penalties which attached to the introduction of such. At any rate, but two numbers of the poor little reforming periodical appeared; and Moses, not angry at his failure, not more than momentarily discouraged by it, accepted the position and wasted no time nor temper in cavilling at it. He had learnt to labour; he could learn to wait. And thus, in hard yet happy work passed away the seven years, from fourteen till twenty-one, which are the seedtime of a man's life. In 1750 when Moses was nearly of age, he came into possession of what really proved an inheritance. A rich silk manufacturer, named Bernhardt, who was a prominent

member of the Berlin synagogue, made a proposal to the learned young man, whose perseverance had given reputation to his scholarship, to become resident tutor to his children. The offer was gladly accepted, and it may be considered Mendelssohn's first step on the road to success. The first step to fame had been taken when the boy had set out on his long tramp to Berlin.

Bernhardt was a kind and cultured man, and in his house Mendelssohn found both congenial occupation and welcome leisure. He was teacher by day, student by night, and author at odd half-hours. He turned to his books with the greatest ardour; and we read of him studying Locke and Plato in the original, for by this time English and Greek were both added to his store of languages. His pupils, meanwhile, were never neglected, nor in the pursuit of great ends were trifles ignored. In

more than one biography special emphasis is laid on his beautifully neat handwriting, which, we are told, much excited his employer's admiration. This humble, but very useful, talent may possibly have been inherited, with some other small-sounding virtues, from the poor father in Dessau, to whom many a nice present was now frequently sent. At the end of three or four years of tutorship, Bernhardt's appreciation of the young man took a very practical expression. He offered Moses Mendelssohn the position of book-keeper in his factory, with some especial responsibilities and emoluments attached to the office. It was a splendid opening, although Moses Mendelssohn, the philosopher, eagerly and gratefully accepting such a post somehow jars on one's susceptibilities, and seems almost an instance of the round man pushed into the square hole. It was, however, an assured position; it

gave him leisure, it gave him independence, and in due time wealth, for as the years went on he grew to be a manager, and finally a partner in the house. His tastes had already drawn him into the outer literary circle of Berlin, which at this time had its headquarters in a sort of club, which met to play chess and to discuss politics and philosophy, and which numbered Dr. Gompertz, the promising young scholar Abbt, and Nicolai, the bookseller,[1] among its members. With these and other kindred spirits, Mendelssohn soon found pleasant welcome; his talents and geniality quickly overcoming any social prejudices, which, indeed, seldom flourish in the republic of letters. And, early disadvantages notwithstanding, we may conclude without much positive evidence on the subject, that Mendelssohn possessed that valuable indefinable gift,

[1] Later the noted publisher of that name.

which culture, wealth, and birth united occasionally fail to bestow—the gift of good manners. He was free alike from conceit and dogmatism, the Scylla and Charybdis to most young men of exceptional talent. He had the loyal nature and the noble mind, which we are told on high authority is the necessary root of the rare flower; and he had, too, the sympathetic, unselfish feeling which we are wont to summarise shortly as a good heart, and which is the first essential to good manners.

When Lessing came to Berlin, about 1745, his play of "Die Juden" was already published, and his reputation sufficiently established to make him an honoured guest at these little literary gatherings. Something of affinity in the wide, unconventional, independent natures of the two men; something, it may be, of likeness in unlikeness in their early struggles with fate, speedily

attracted Lessing and Mendelssohn to each other. The casual acquaintance soon ripened into an intimate and life-long friendship, which gave to Mendelssohn, the Jew, wider knowledge and illimitable hopes of the outer, inhospitable world—which gave to Lessing, the Christian, new belief in long-denied virtues; and which, best of all, gave to humanity those "divine lessons of Nathan der Weise," as Goethe calls them—for which character Mendelssohn sat, all unconsciously, as model, and scarcely idealized model, to his friend. It was, most certainly, a rarely happy friendship for both, and for the world. Lessing was the godfather of Mendelssohn's first book. The subject was suggested in the course of conversation between them, and a few days after Mendelssohn brought his manuscript to Lessing. He saw no more of it till his friend handed him the proofs and a

small sum for the copyright; and it was in this way that the "Philosophische Gespräche" was anonymously published in 1754. Later, the friends brought out together a little book, entitled "Pope as a Metaphysician," and this was followed up with some philosophical essays ("Briefe über die Empfindungen") which quickly ran through three editions, and Mendelssohn became known as an author. A year or two later, he gained the prize which the Royal Academy of Berlin offered for the best essay on the problem "Are metaphysics susceptible of mathematical demonstration;" for which prize Kant was one of the competitors.

Lessing's migration to Leipzig, and his temporary absences from the capital in the capacity of tutor, made breaks, but no diminution, in the friendship with Mendelssohn; and the "Literatur-Briefe," a journal cast in the form of correspondence on art, science, and

literature, to which Nicolai, Abbt, and other writers were occasional contributors, continued its successful publication till the year 1765. A review in this journal of one of the literary efforts of Frederick the Second gave rise to a characteristic ebullition of what an old writer quaintly calls, "the German endemical distemper of Judæophobia." In this essay, Mendelssohn had presumed to question some of the conclusions of the royal author; and although the contents of the "Literatur-Briefe" were generally unsigned, the anonymity was in most cases but a superficial disguise. The paper drew down upon Mendelssohn the denunciation of a too loyal subject of Frederick's, and he was summoned to Sans Souci to answer for it. Frederick appears to have been more sensible than his thin-skinned defender, and the interview passed off amicably enough. Indeed, a

short while after, we hear of a petition being prepared to secure to Mendelssohn certain rights and privileges of dwelling unmolested in whichever quarter of the city he might choose—a right which at that time was granted to but few Jews, and at a goodly expenditure of both capital and interest. Mendelssohn, loyal to his brethren, long and stoutly refused to have any concession granted on the score of his talents which he might not claim on the score of his manhood in common with the meanest and most ignorant of his co-religionists. And there is some little doubt whether the partial exemptions which Mendelssohn subsequently obtained, were due to the petition, which suffered many delays and vicissitudes in the course of presentation, or to the subtle and silent force of public opinion.

Meanwhile Mendelssohn married, and the story of his wooing, as first told by

Berthold Auerbach, makes a pretty variation on the old theme. It was, in this case, no short idyll of "she was beautiful and he fell in love." To begin with, it was all prosaic enough. A certain Abraham Gugenheim, a trader at Hamburg, caused it to be hinted to Mendelssohn that he had a virtuous and blue-eyed but portionless daughter, named Fromet, who had heard of the philosopher's fame, and had read portions of his books; and who, mutual friends considered, would make him a careful and loving helpmate. So Mendelssohn, who was now thirty-two years old, and desirous to "settle," went to the merchant's house and saw the prim German maiden, and talked with her; and was pleased enough with her talk, or perhaps with the silent eloquence of the blue eyes, to go next day to the father and to say he thought Fromet would suit him for a wife. But to his

surprise Gugenheim hesitated, and stiffness and embarrassment seemed to have taken the place of the yesterday's cordial greeting; still, it was no objection on *his* part, he managed at last to stammer out. For a minute Mendelssohn was hopelessly puzzled, but only for a minute; then it flashed upon him, "It is she who objects?" he exclaimed, "then it must be my hump;" and the poor father of course could only uncomfortably respond with apologetic platitudes about the unaccountability of girls' fancies. The humour as well as the pathos of the situation touched Mendelssohn, for he had no vanity to be piqued, and he instantly resolved to do his best to win this Senta-like maiden, who, less fortunate than the Dutch heroine, had had her pretty dreams of a hero dispelled, instead of accentuated by actual vision. Might he see her once again, he asked. "To say farewell? Certainly!" an-

swered the father, glad that his awkward mission was ending so amicably. So Mendelssohn went again, and found Fromet with the blue eyes bent steadily over her work; perhaps to hide a tear as much as to prevent a glance, for Fromet, as the sequel shows, was a tender-hearted maiden, and although she did not like to look at her deformed suitor, she did not want to wound him. Then Mendelssohn began to talk, beautiful glowing talk, and the spell which his writings had exercised began again to work on the girl. From philosophy to love in its impersonal form is an easy transition. She grew interested and self-forgetful. "And do *you* think that marriages are made in Heaven?" she eagerly questioned, as some early quaint superstition on this most attractive of themes was vividly touched upon by her visitor. "Surely," he replied, "and some old beliefs on this head assert that

all such contracts are settled in childhood. Strange to say, a special legend attaches itself to my fortune in this matter; and as our talk has led to this subject perhaps I may venture to tell it to you. The twin spirit which fate allotted to me, I am told, was fair, blue-eyed, and richly endowed with all spiritual charms; but, alas! ill-luck had added to her physical gifts a hump. A chorus of lamentation arose from the angels who minister in these matters. The 'pity of it' was so evident. The burden of such a deformity might well outweigh all the other gifts of her beautiful youth, might render her morose, self-conscious, unhappy. If the load now had been but laid on a man! And the angels pondered, wondering, waiting to see if any would volunteer to take the maiden's burden from her. And I sprang up, and prayed that it might be laid upon my shoulders. And it was settled so."

There was a minute's pause, and then, so the story goes, the work was passionately thrown down, and the tender blue eyes were streaming, and the rest we may imagine. The simple, loving heart was won, and Fromet became his wife.

They had a modest little house with a pretty garden on the outskirts of Berlin, where a good deal of hospitality went on in a quiet, friendly way. The ornaments of their dwelling were, perhaps, a little disproportionate in size and quantity to the rest of the surroundings; but this was no matter of choice on the part of the newly married couple, since one of the minor vexations imposed on Jews at this date was the obligation laid on every bridegroom to treat himself to a large quantity of china for the good of the manufactory. The tastes or the wants of the purchaser were not consulted; and in this especial

instance twenty life-sized china apes were allotted to the bridegroom. We may imagine poor Mendelssohn and his wife eyeing these apes often, somewhat as Cinderella looked at her pumpkin when longing for the fairy's transforming wand. Possibilities of those big baboons changed into big books may have tantalized Mendelssohn; whilst Fromet's more prosaic mind may have confined itself to china and yet have found an unlimited range for wishing. However, the unchanged and unchanging apes notwithstanding, Mendelssohn and his wife enjoyed very many years of quiet and contented happiness, and by and by came children, four of them, and then those old ungainly grievances were, it is likely, transformed into playfellows.

Parenthood, perhaps, is never quite easy, but it was a very difficult duty, and a terribly divided one, for a cultivated

man who a century ago desired to bring up his children as good Jews and good citizens. Many a time, it stands on record, when this patient, self-respecting, unoffending scholar took his children for a walk, coarse epithets and insulting cries followed them through the streets. No resentment was politic, no redress was possible. "Father, is it *wicked* to be a Jew?" his children would ask, as time after time the crowd hooted at them. "Father, is it *good* to be a Jew?" they grew to ask later on, when in more serious walks of life they found all gates but the Jews' gate closed against them. Mendelssohn must have found such questions increasingly difficult to answer or to parry. Their very talents which enlarged the boundaries must have made his clever children rebel against the limitations which were so cruelly imposed. His eldest son Joseph early developed a strong scientific bias; how

could this be utilized? The only profession which he, as a Jew, might enter, was that of medicine, and for that he had a decided distaste: perforce he was set to commercial pursuits, and his especial talent had to run to waste, or, at best, to dilettanteism. When this Joseph had sons of his own, can we wonder very much that he cut the knot and saved his children from a like experience, by bringing them up as Christians?

Mendelssohn himself, all his life through, was unswervingly loyal to his faith. He took every disability accruing from it, as he took his own especial one, as being, so far as he was concerned, inevitable, and thus to be borne as patiently as might be. To him, most certainly, it would never have occurred to slip from under a burden which had been laid upon him to bear. Concerning Fromet's influence on her

children records are silent, and we are driven to conjecture that the pretty significance of her name was somewhat meaningless.[1] The story of her wooing suggests susceptibility, perhaps, rather than strength of heart; and it may be that as years went on the "blue eyes" got into a habit of weeping only over sorrows and wrongs which needed a less eloquent and a more helpful mode of treatment.

If Mendelssohn's wife had been able to show her children the home side of Jewish life, its suggestive ceremonialism, its domestic compensations—possibly her sons, almost certainly her daughters, would have learnt the brave, sweet patience that was common to Jewish mothers. But this takes us to the region of "might have been." Gentle, tender-

[1] Fromet was the affectionate diminutive of *Fromm*—pious. Pet names of the sort were common at that time; we often come across a Gütle or a Schönste or the like.

hearted Fromet, it is to be feared, failed in true piety, and, the mother anchor missing, the children drifted from their moorings.

The leisure of the years succeeding his marriage was fully occupied by Mendelssohn in literary pursuits. The whole of the Pentateuch was, by degrees, translated into pure German, and simultaneous editions were published in German and in Hebrew characters. This great gift to his people was followed by a metrical translation of the Psalms; a work which took him ten years, during which time he always carried about with him a Hebrew Psalter, interleaved with blank pages. In 1783 he published his "Jerusalem," [1] a sort of Church and State survey of the Jewish religion. The first and larger part of it dwells on the distinction between Judaism, as

[1] "Jerusalem, oder über religiöse Macht und Judenthum."

a State religion, and Judaism as the "inheritance" of a dispersed nationality. He essays to prove the essential differences between civil and religious government, and to demonstrate that penal enactments, which in the one case were just and defensible, were, in the changed circumstances of the other, harmful, and, in point of fact, unjudicial. The work was, in effect, a masterly effort on Mendelssohn's part to exorcise the "cursing spirit" which, engendered partly by long-suffered persecution, and partly by long association with the strict discipline of the Catholic Church, had taken a firm grip on Jewish ecclesiastical authority, and was constantly expressing itself in bitter anathema and morose excommunication. The second part of the book is mainly concerned with a vindication of the Jewish character and a plea for toleration. Scholarly and temperate as is

the tone of this work throughout, it yet evoked a good deal of rough criticism from the so-called orthodox in both religious camps—from the well-meaning, purblind persons of the sort who, Lessing declares, see only one road, and strenuously deny the possible existence of any other.

In 1777, Frederic the Second desired to judge for himself whether Jewish ecclesiastical authority clashed at any point with the State or municipal law of the land. A digest of the Jewish Code on the general questions, and more especially on the subject of property and inheritance, was decreed to be prepared in German, and to Mendelssohn was entrusted the task. He had the assistance of the Chief Rabbi of Berlin, and the result of these labours was published in 1778, under the title of "Ritual Laws of the Jews." Another Jewish philosophical work (pub-

lished in 1785) was "Morning Hours."[1] This was a volume of essays on the evidences of the existence of the Deity and of conclusions concerning His attributes deduced from the contemplation of His works. Originally these essays had been given in the form of familiar lectures on natural philosophy by Mendelssohn to his children and to one or two of their friends (including the two Humboldts) in his own house, every morning. In the same category of more distinctively Jewish books we may place a translation of Manasseh Ben Israel's famous "Vindiciæ Judæorum," which he published, with a very eloquent preface, so early as 1781, just at the time when Dohm's generous work on the condition of the Jews as citizens of the State had made its auspicious appearance. Although this

[1] "Morgenstunden, oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes."

is one of Mendelssohn's minor efforts, the preface contains many a beautiful passage. His gratitude to Dohm is so deep and yet so dignified; his defence of his people is so wide, and his belief in humanity so sincere; and the whole is withal so short, that it makes most pleasant reading. One small quotation may perhaps be permitted, as pertinent to some recent discussions on Jewish subjects. "It is," says he, "objected by some that the Jews are both too indolent for agriculture and too proud for mechanical trades; that if the restrictions were removed they would uniformly select the arts and sciences, as less laborious and more profitable, and soon engross all light, genteel, and learned professions. But those who thus argue conclude from the *present* state of things how they will be in the *future*, which is not a fair mode of reasoning. What should induce a Jew

to waste his time in learning to manage the plough, the trowel, the plane, &c., while he knows he can make no practical use of them? But put them in his hand and suffer him to follow the bent of his inclinations as freely as other subjects of the State, and the result will not long be doubtful. Men of genius and talent will, of course, embrace the learned professions; those of inferior capacity will turn their minds to mechanical pursuits; the rustic will cultivate the land; each will contribute, according to his station in life, his quota to the aggregate of productive labour."

As he says in some other place of himself, nature never intended him, either physically or morally, for a wrestler; and this little essay, where there is no strain of argument or scope for deep erudition, is yet no unworthy specimen of the great philosopher's powers. Poetic attempts too, and mostly

on religious subjects, occasionally varied his counting-house duties and his more serious labours; but although he truly possessed, if ever man did, what Landor calls "the poetic heart," yet it is in his prose, rather than in his poetry, that we mostly see its evidences. The book which is justly claimed as his greatest, and which first gave him his title to be considered a wide and deep-thinking philosopher, is his "Phædon."[1] The idea of such a work had long been germinating in him, and the death of his dear friend Abbt, with whom he had had many a fruitful discussion on the subject, turned his thoughts more fixedly on the hopes which make sorrows bearable, and the work was published in the year following Abbt's death.

The first part is a very pure and classical German rendering of the original

[1] "Phædon, oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele."

Greek form of Plato, and the remainder an eloquent summary of all that religion, reason, and experience urge in support of a belief in immortality. It is cast in the form of conversation between Socrates and his friends—a choice in composition which caused a Jewish critic (M. David Friedländer) to liken Moses Mendelssohn to Moses the lawgiver. "For Moses spake, and *Socrates* was to him as a mouth" (Ex. iv. 15). In less than two years "Phædon" ran through three German editions, and it was speedily translated into English, French, Dutch, Italian, Danish, and Hebrew. Then, at one stride, came fame; and great scholars, great potentates, and even the heads of his own community, sought his society. But fame was ever of incomparably less value to Mendelssohn than friendship, and any sort of notoriety he honestly hated. Thus, when his celebrity brought upon him a polemical discussion,

the publicity which ensued, notwithstanding that the personal honour in which he was held was thereby enhanced, so thoroughly upset his nerves that the result was a severe and protracted illness. It came about in this wise : Lavater, the French pastor, in 1769, had translated Bonnet's "Evidences of Christianity" into German ; he published it with the following dedication to Moses Mendelssohn :—

"DEAR SIR,—I think I cannot give you a stronger proof of my admiration of your excellent writings, and of your still more excellent character, that of an Israelite in whom there is no guile ; nor offer you a better requital for the great gratification which I, some years ago, enjoyed in your interesting society, than by dedicating to you the ablest philosophical enquiry into the evidences of Christianity that I am acquainted with.

"I am fully conscious of your profound judgment, steadfast love of truth, literary independence, enthusiasm for philosophy in general, and esteem for Bonnet's works in particular. The amiable discretion with which, notwithstanding your contrariety to the Christian religion, you delivered your opinion on it, is still fresh in my memory. And so indelible and important is the impression, which your truly philosophical respect for the moral character of its Founder made on me, in one of the happiest moments of my existence, that I venture to beseech you—nay, before the God of Truth, your and my Creator and Father, I beseech and conjure you—to read this work, I will not say with philosophical impartiality, which I am confident will be the case, but for the purpose of publicly refuting it, in case you should find the main arguments, in support of the facts of Christianity, untenable ; or should you

find them conclusive, with the determination of doing what policy, love of truth, and probity demand—what Socrates would doubtless have done, had he read the work, and found it unanswerable.

"May God still cause much truth and virtue to be disseminated by your means, and make you experience the happiness my whole heart wishes you.

"JOHANN CASPAR LAVATER.

"ZURICH, 25*th of August*, 1769."

It was a most unpleasant position for Mendelssohn. Plain speaking was not so much the fashion then as now, and defence might more easily be read as defiance. At that time the position of the Jews in all the European States was most precarious, and outspoken utterances might not only alienate the timid followers whom Mendelssohn hoped to enlighten, but, probably, offend the

powerful outsiders whom he was beginning to influence. No man has any possible right to demand of another a public confession of faith ; the conversation to which Lavater alluded as some justification for his request had been a private one, and the reference to it, moreover, was not altogether accurate. And Mendelssohn hated controversy, and held a very earnest conviction that no good cause, certainly no religious one, is ever much forwarded by it. Should he be silent, refuse to reply, and let judgment go by default ? Comfort and expediency both pleaded in favour of this course, but truth was mightier and prevailed. Like unto the three who would not be "careful" of their answer even under the ordeal of fire, he soon decided to testify plainly and without undue thought of consequences. Mendelssohn was not the sort to serve God with special reservations as to Rimmon. Defi-

nitely he answered his too zealous questioner in a document which is so entirely full of dignity and of reason that it is difficult to make quotations from it.[1] "Certain inquiries," he writes, "we finish once for all in our lives." . . . "And I herewith declare in the presence of the God of truth, your and my Creator, by whom you have conjured me in your dedication, that I will adhere to my principles so long as my entire soul does not assume another nature." And then, emphasizing the position that it is by character and not by controversy that *he* would have Jews shame their traducers, he goes fully and boldly into the whole question. He shows with a delicate touch of humour that Judaism, in being no proselytizing faith, has a claim to be let alone. "I am so

[1] The whole correspondence can be read in "Memoirs of Moses Mendelssohn," by M. Samuels, published in 1827.

fortunate as to count amongst my friends many a worthy man who is not of my faith. Never yet has my heart whispered, Alas! for this good man's soul. He who believes that no salvation is to be found out of the pale of his own church, must often feel such sighs arise in his bosom." "Suppose there were among my contemporaries a Confucius or a Solon, I could consistently with my religious principles love and admire the great man, but I should never hit on the idea of converting a Confucius or a Solon. What should I convert him for? As he does not belong to the congregation of Jacob, my religious laws were not made for him, and on doctrines we should soon come to an understanding. Do I think there is a chance of his being saved? I certainly believe that he who leads mankind on to virtue in this world cannot be damned in the next." "We believe . . . that those who regulate their lives according

to the religion of nature and of reason are called virtuous men of other nations, and are, equally with our patriarchs, the children of eternal salvation." "Whoever is not born comformable to our laws has no occasion to live according to them. We alone consider ourselves bound to acknowledge their authority, and this can give no offence to our neighbours." He refuses to criticize Bonnet's work in detail on the ground that in his opinion "Jews should be scrupulous in abstaining from reflections on the predominant religion;" but nevertheless, whilst repeating his "so earnest wish to have no more to do with religious controversy," the honesty of the man asserts itself in boldly adding, "I give you at the same time to understand that I could, very easily, bring forward something in refutation of M. Bonnet's work."

Mendelssohn's reply brought speedily, as it could scarcely fail to do, an ample

and sincere apology from Lavater, a "retracting" of the challenge, an earnest entreaty to forgive what had been "importunate and improper" in the dedicator, and an expression of "sincerest respect" and "tenderest affection" for his correspondent. Mendelssohn's was a nature to have more sympathy with the errors incidental to too much than to too little zeal, and the apology was accepted as generously as it was offered. And here ended, so far as the principals were concerned, this somewhat unique specimen of a literary squabble. A crowd of lesser writers, unfortunately, hastened to make capital out of it; and a bewildering mist of nondescript and pedantic compositions soon darkened the literary firmament, obscuring and vulgarizing the whole subject. They took "sides" and gave "views" of the controversy; but Mendelssohn answered none and read as few

as possible of these publications. Still the strain and worry told on his sensitive and peace-loving nature, and he did not readily recover his old elasticity of temperament.

In 1778 Lessing's wife died, and his friend's trouble touched deep chords both of sympathy and of memory in Mendelssohn. Yet more cruelly were they jarred when, two years later, Lessing himself followed, and an uninterrupted friendship of over thirty years was thus dissolved. Lessing and Mendelssohn had been to each other the sober realization of the beautiful ideal embodied in the drama of "Nathan der Weise." "What to you makes me seem Christian makes of you the Jew to me," each could most truly say to the other. They helped the world to see it too, and to recognize the Divine truth that "to be to the best thou knowest ever true is all the creed."

The death of his friend was a terrible blow to Mendelssohn. "After wrinkles come," says Mr. Lowell, in likening ancient friendships to slow-growing trees, "few plant, but water dead ones with vain tears." In this case, the actual pain of loss was greatly aggravated by some publications which appeared shortly after Lessing's death, impugning his sincerity and religious feeling. Germany, as Goethe once bitterly remarked, "needs time to be thankful." In the first year or two following Lessing's death it was, perhaps, too early to expect gratitude from his country for the lustre his talents had shed on it. Some of the pamphlets would make it seem that it was too early even for decency. Mendelssohn vigorously took up the cudgels for his dead friend; too vigorously perhaps, since Kant remarked that "it is Mendelssohn's fault, if Jacobi (the most

notorious of the assailants) should now consider himself a philosopher." To Mendelssohn's warm-hearted, generous nature it would, however, have been impossible to remain silent when one whom he knew to be tolerant, earnest, and sincere in the fullest sense of those words of highest praise, was accused of "covert Spinozism;" a charge which again was broadly rendered, by these wretched ignorant interpreters of a language they failed to understand, as atheism and hypocrisy.

This was his last literary work. It shows no sign of decaying powers; it is full of pathos, of wit, of clear close reasoning, and of brilliant satire; yet nevertheless it was his monument as well as his friend's. He took the manuscript to his publisher in the last day of the year 1785; and in the first week of the New Year 1786, still only fifty-six years old, he quietly and painlessly

died. That last work seems to make a beautiful and fitting end to his life; a life which truly adds a worthy stanza to what Herder calls "the greatest poem of all time—the history of the Jews."

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